

Boris Vadimovich Sokolov Rokossovsky

NOW GREAT PEOPLE

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FOREWORD

Konstantin Rokossovsky was relatively recently called the "Marshal of the Two Nations"

Soviet and Polish. In the Soviet Union and throughout the world, he was recognized as one of the greatest commanders of the Second World War. Now, at

home, Marshal Rokossovsky is, to put it mildly, cool and rather trying to forget, as we all try to forget about something unpleasant. His name reminds the Poles of the time of undivided Soviet domination, when the country

thousands of years of history was actually deprived of sovereignty. In Russia, the figure of the marshal, as one of the main architects of victory in the Great

Patriotic War, was in the shadow of Stalin and his first deputy in the post of Supreme Commander Zhukov, whom rumor called the "Marshal of Victory" back in

perestroika times. Here, of course, the nationality of Rokossovsky affected. Konstantin Konstantinovich said more than once with bitterness that in Russia his

consider

Pole, and in Poland - Russian. In both countries, this duality brought him quite a few

trouble. In the Soviet Union, his Polish origin was one of the reasons for his arrest in 1937 and more than two years in prison. Nationality was also the main

reason that Rokossovsky was not allowed to take Berlin in 1945 - this honor went to his former subordinate Zhukov, a native Russian. Because of

the same nationality, he was sent after the war to Poland, a country largely foreign to him by that time, and forced into

for many

years to deal primarily not with the military, but deeply alien to the marshal political

questions.

In Soviet times, the biography of Rokossovsky was fairly mythologized and differed little from

from the biographies of other Soviet military leaders. In it about the mistakes of the marshal, as well as about the sad

the events of 1937 were mentioned in passing, devotion to Rokossovsky

communist ideas, it was argued that it was ideological considerations that pushed him to the side

Bolsheviks. The war and the role of Rokossovsky in it were portrayed quite smoothly, in complete

in accordance with the official concept, according to which the strategic art of the Soviet commanders, the indestructible unity of the party and the people, which ensured victory, were in the first place, and the suffering of the people and the defeat of the Red Army were pushed far into the background. Of course, difficulties in relations with the Polish leadership were avoided in every possible way during Rokossovsky's tenure as Minister of National Defense of the Polish People's Republic. And absolutely no attention was paid to the psychology of the marshal, his inner experiences. According to the canons of that time, the heroes of Soviet history were forbidden any reflection, any doubts about the correctness of the "only true" course of the party.

Rokossovsky managed to leave his memoirs, although he was finishing them at the time when he was seriously ill. The version of the book that came out shortly after

the death of the marshal did not stand out too much from the canons

Soviet literature of this kind. Nothing was said about the repressions of the thirties, criticism of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command and other Soviet military

leaders sounded rather muffled. But, thanks to the posthumous work of the editors, the book

appeared and clearly

fantastic episodes, especially those related to the participation of Konstantin Konstantinovich in the Civil War. At the same time, in the text written by Rokossovsky himself (the marshal did not use the help of lithographers), unlike many other Soviet military memoirs, for example, Zhukovsky, there are no significant distortions of facts.

After the censorship oppression weakened, and then completely disappeared, the most complete version of Rokossovsky's memoirs appeared with the restoration of

censored cuts, which mainly concerned criticism of the plans of the Headquarters and the actions of other Soviet military leaders. But we will not find

any criticism of Stalin personally or his repressive policies in this version of the memoirs either. We find references to repressions only in the drafts of memoirs, and all of them are carefully crossed out by

Konstantin Konstantinovich. This was probably done not only for censorship reasons. The fact is that Rokossovsky never publicly criticized Stalin for the repressions, even when, at the height of the Khrushchev thaw, criticism of the "personality cult" was welcomed at the highest party and state level. It can be assumed that the marshal

life

was grateful to Stalin for getting him out of prison (after all, his release could not

occur without the leader's sanction), and then elevated to front commander, marshal, twice Hero of the Soviet Union.

Until now, a full-fledged critical biography of Rokossovsky has not appeared.

Critical, I emphasize, not in relation to the marshal, but in relation to the propaganda-patriotic myths created around him and around the entire Great Patriotic War. What are the names worth

recent biographies of Rokossovsky - "Victory not at any cost", "Genius of maneuver" ... How
We

we will see further, Rokossovsky paid about the same high price for victories as other Soviet generals and marshals. Stalin's

Red Army could not fight differently. This was not a fact of military art, but of sociology. The matter was both in the quality of

human material, officers and soldiers, whose educational level and discipline left much to be desired, and in the totalitarian

control system brought to its limit, which significantly limited commanders at all levels, instilling the desire to act according to a

pattern. This was due to the fear of punishment for any non-standard actions. Because of the same fear, the commanders

were forced to send false reports, many times exaggerating the losses of the enemy and the achievements of their own troops,

while at the same time significantly underestimating their victims. As we shall see later, Konstantin Konstantinovich was also

sometimes forced to send false reports to the Headquarters in an attempt to divert Stalin's anger from his subordinates.

Rokossovsky cannot be considered a "genius of maneuver", since he did not carry out any remarkable maneuvers of strategic importance, like the famous Tarutinsky march maneuver by M. I. Kutuzov. The advantages of Rokossovsky as a commander were the ability to quickly assemble

retreating units, force them to stubbornly defend themselves, and under favorable conditions, to counterattack. When repulsing the enemy's offensive at positions prepared in advance, Konstantin Konstantinovich was better than other

Soviet generals in predicting the direction of the main attack and concentrating more infantry and artillery there.

He preferred to use tanks in close cooperation with the infantry and not too large masses, although this was not always possible. During the offensive, Rokossovsky boldly carried out bilateral coverage and encirclement of the enemy, but the

truly successful encirclement of him by parts of large groupings of German troops was only during Operation Bagration in Belarus.

What Rokossovsky really stood out among other Soviet generals and marshals was his emphatic correctness in relations

with his subordinates. Unlike others, Konstantin Konstantinovich never used the "obscene" style of command,

assault and threats of execution. I could not find a single order to shoot specific

officers

signed by him, while there are plenty of such orders signed by Zhukov and other "marshals of Victory". He was, without a doubt, the most humane of all Soviet military leaders. He also tried, whenever possible, to reduce the losses of his soldiers, but such opportunities were very rare and the overall ratio of Soviet and German losses in the operations of the fronts and armies he commanded had practically no effect.

And yet, without a doubt, Rokossovsky was the prettiest of the Soviet marshals. A gallant handsome man of almost two meters

in height, always strict, smart, without the slightest flaw in

uniform, he was always liked by women. It was strictly forbidden to write on this topic in Soviet times, and when the fashion for

such publications appeared, Rokossovsky was powerfully overshadowed by the figure of Zhukov, in whose personal life the public

had an increased interest. In general, for a significant part of his life, Rokossovsky found himself, as it were, in the shadow of Zhukov,

and, probably, Konstantin Konstantinovich was depressed to some extent.

But in the existing biographies of the marshal, not only questions of the military art of Rokossovsky or his

psychological

experiences are not clarified. Very little is known about his participation in the First World War and the Civil War, about

his service in

the interwar period, about

post-war

stay in Poland. As for his personal life, Konstantin Konstantinovich, it seems, was a rather closed person and preferred not to talk about

his feelings even in the circle of relatives and friends. Yes, and the time was such, not conducive to frankness. Therefore, we can

judge the details of the marshal's life only from interviews of Rokossovsky's descendants, largely based on family traditions,

and from a few more or less candid memoirs of people who somehow knew the marshal. Such memoirs

appeared only in the

era of perestroika and glasnost, a couple of decades after the death of Konstantin Konstantinovich.

Rokossovsky's life path, as it turned out, is still very poorly documented. There are practically no documents about his birth and the first twenty years of his life, up to the beginning of the First World War. Therefore, we are forced to reconstruct

even the

date and place of birth of the marshal only on the basis of later evidence. Not too many documents about his

activities

during the Great Patriotic War have been published; Zhukov and in this

respect

much more fortunate. Even more sparsely represented is the published documentary

material on the marshal's service in the interwar period, and especially materials related to his arrest and investigation. The latter were destroyed in the early 1960s. A number of documents have been published on Rokossovsky's service in Poland after the end of the Great Patriotic War. As for the last years of the marshal's service in the Soviet Union, one can only point to his speech at the October 1957 Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, dedicated to the analysis of the case of Marshal Zhukov. So writing an academic biography of the commander requires many years of research in the Russian and Polish archives and, probably, is still a matter of a rather distant future.

My task is much more modest. I want to dwell on the key points in the biography of Marshal Rokossovsky and, above all, on his professional, military activities, on the most interesting moments of operations carried out under his leadership with the involvement

little-known and unpublished archival documents. I also sought to penetrate the inner world

marshal, to understand how he lived under the conditions of a totalitarian regime, to what extent he shared its ideology and values. If the German generals and field marshals fully felt the iron grip of the state only after the failure of the anti-Hitler conspiracy on July 20, 1944,

then in

In the Soviet Union, high-ranking military men experienced in their own skin all the charms of totalitarianism as early as 1937. Rokossovsky was not a participant in the Stalinist repressions, but he was their witness and victim, and this could not but affect his personality.

I tried to show Konstantin Konstantinovich both as a commander and as a person, without closing my eyes to his mistakes and failures. How successful was my task - to judge to the reader.

I do not hide the fact that in the process of working on the book I felt more and more sympathy for my hero, who managed to preserve decency, justice and other human qualities in the most difficult conditions.

I bring my deep gratitude to the grandson of Marshal Konstantin Vilyevich and great-granddaughter Ariadna Konstantinovna Rokossovskaya. They provided me with invaluable assistance by sharing family archive materials and a number of ideas regarding the biography of their great ancestor,

and

taking the trouble to review the manuscript before publication. I also bring my

sincere gratitude to the Polish historian Tomasz Bohun for his help in finding the facts of Rokossovsky's biography, as well as to Russian historians Konstantin Alexandrovich Zalessky,

who made a number of remarks on the manuscript, and to Sergei Vladimirovich Volkov, who drew my

attention to a number of valuable sources on the history of Warsaw at the end of the 19th century - the beginning of the 20th century.

CHAPTER ONE POLISH YOUTH

The ancestors of Konstantin Konstantinovich, according to family tradition, came from an old gentry family with the Glaubich coat of arms: in a blue field, a golden (or silver) fish swimming to the left, five ostrich feathers on a helmet - first mentioned in 1396. One of the marshal's ancestors in the 15th century received the Rokosovo estate. Kokoz in Polish means "swamp, quagmire"; probably, the estate of the marshal's ancestors was in marshy places. From there, the nobles Rokosovsky went, who later became Rokossovsky. Their surname is included in the "General Armorial of the Russian Empire" - a set of coats of arms of Russian noble families, established by decree of Emperor Paul 1 dated

January 20, 1797 and including more than three thousand family and several dozen personal coats of arms, as well as the second part of the "Armorial of the noble families of the Kingdom of Poland."

Marshal's great-grandfather Jozef Rokossovsky was "elected and appointed" on November 12, 1811 as a lieutenant of the Second Cavalry Regiment of the Army of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw - a Polish state formation created by Napoleon 1 and under his command.

personal

protectorate. Jozef Rokossovsky was still a nobleman, since he entered the service as an officer, but already his son Jan Vincenty was not a gentry, but just a woodsman (assistant forester). The fact is that many Polish nobles at the time of Poland's accession to the Russian Empire did not own serfs, and sometimes land, and by their position

not much

different from the peasants. At the same time, the nobility was very numerous. Already in the 19th century she

accounted for 8 percent of the population of the Commonwealth, and in Mazovia and Podlasie - more than 20 percent. The tsarist government, not without reason, believed that the Polish nobility

retains a free spirit and strives to get rid of Russian domination, which was especially clearly manifested in the uprisings of 1830-1831 and 1863-1864.

Therefore, the authorities tried

in every possible way

reduce the number of gentry, first in the Western Territory, in the territories of Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, formerly part of the Commonwealth, and then in the Kingdom of Poland, after it

joining the Russian Empire in 1815. According to the decree of March 29, 1812, the gentry title was recognized only for those for whom it had already been previously

approved. The commission that conducted the audit of 1816 was entrusted with the duty to consider the rights of persons

called

themselves as a gentry, from the point of view of the presence of a record about them in the revision tales of 1795. Those who could not confirm their nobility were recorded as free grain growers, state peasants or philistines.

After the uprising of 1830-1831, the Committee of the Western Provinces, among other things, took up solving the problems of the gentry class. On October 19, 1831, the law "On the analysis

gentry in

Western provinces and about ordering such people. All the gentry who are not capable

to confirm their nobility with documents, they were enrolled in specially created estates of single-palaces and citizens (citizens) of the Western provinces. The gentry were also deprived

Polish

gentry who did not have land or, having land, did not have serfs. At the same time, the approach to the Orthodox gentry was much

more liberal. To confirm the nobility, obviously fake diplomas were also accepted, which were produced in large quantities for a moderate fee.

on

Ukrainian and Belarusian lands. In particular, a large number of such fake diplomas were presented in the second half of the

18th century, when former Ukrainian free Cossacks tried to enroll in the nobility. So, the father of the writer Nikolai Gogol,

Vasily Yanovsky, had a diploma on the granting of the nobility to the Mogilev colonel Ostap Gogol in 1674 by the Polish king

Jan Casimir. Geroldia, unlike subsequent researchers, was not embarrassed that Jan

Casimir abdicated in 1668.

By a decree of January 19, 1866, the estates of single-palaces and citizens of the Western provinces were abolished and

all Polish gentry who did not prove their nobility were recorded as peasants or philistines. Konstantin

Konstantinovich himself was recorded as a tradesman. It can be assumed, that

Rokossovsky's ancestors lost their nobility back in the 1840s, since they lived on the territory of the Kingdom of Poland. Most

likely, they could not submit papers confirming their gentry, and were recorded as citizens, and then as philistines.

According to family tradition, Jan Vincenty quarreled with his son Xavier Jozef, the future father of our hero,

because he ran away from home as a ten-year-old boy to take part in the January 1863 uprising for the revival of an independent

Poland, and his father found him with difficulty in the Lublin region. Jan Vincenty himself, however, also did not escape imprisonment

in the Warsaw Citadel for sympathy with the rebels.

The mother of Xavier and the grandmother of Konstantin Konstantinovich was Constance Kholevitskaya,

who was related to the famous soloist of the Warsaw Opera Ballet Helena Holewicka. It can be assumed that the family of Jan Vincenta Rokossovsky was quite wealthy. Xavier, born in 1853, according to his daughter Helena, was a man of average height, thin, but physically strong. He married in the late 1880s or at the very beginning of the 1890s, at the age of about forty, a teacher Antonina (Atonida) Ovsyannikova, from the townspeople of the town of Telekhany, Pinsk district, Minsk province, who, most likely, was

much

younger than spouse. She was Russian and Orthodox. Probably, the fact that Xavier Jozef married a Russian alienated him from his Polish relatives.

Later, already in Soviet times, Konstantin Konstantinovich wrote in questionnaires and autobiographies that his father was a railway engineer. For example, in his autobiography, written immediately after his release from prison, Rokossovsky wrote: "I was born in Warsaw in 1896 in a working-class family. Father is a working machinist on the Riga-Oryol, and then the Warsaw-Vienna railway. Died in 1905. Mother is a worker in a hosiery factory. She died in 1910... He graduated from the four-year city school in 1909 in Warsaw (a suburb of Prague)."

Here, as we shall see later, much is distorted. At the time of the birth of Constantine, Xavier worked on the railway as an auditor, that is, an employee. Although before that, of course, he could work as a machinist. There is no certainty that Konstantin's mother really worked in a hosiery factory. And when and where Rokossovsky himself was born is a question to which there are various answers.

Rokossovsky in all questionnaires named December 8 (20), 1896 as his date of birth. He defined the place of his birth in different ways: until 1945, the marshal always claimed that he was born in Warsaw. In 1945, in a questionnaire, as well as in an autobiography written on December 27, Velikiye Luki in the Pskov province was indicated as the place of his birth. Then, when in the fall of 1949, Stalin ordered Rokossovsky to become a Pole again and head the Polish Army, his place

Warsaw was again born. After the return of Konstantin Konstantinovich to the Soviet Union seven years later, he again began to indicate the place of birth of Velikie Luki.

The grandson of Marshal Konstantin Vilyevich Rokossovsky put forward an interesting hypothesis, why suddenly in

post-war autobiography of his grandfather, Warsaw as a place of birth was replaced by Velikie Luki. In 1945, Rokossovsky became twice a Hero of the Soviet Union. According to position 0b of this rank, a bust was supposed to be installed in the homeland of the Hero twice. How will you install it in Warsaw? Of course, the Polish government is entirely dependent on Moscow, but it will not be very convenient for it to erect a bust in the capital in honor of the hero of another country, thereby openly demonstrating its dependence on

THE USSR. Therefore, in his autobiography, Rokossovsky, obviously, on the urgent recommendation from above, indicated the completely Russian Velikie Luki as the place of birth. Perhaps he was chosen because what's in it In the vicinity there used to be the estate of the Rokossovsky barons, whose distant relative, not without reason, was considered the Soviet marshal. It is quite possible that the birthplace of Rokossovsky was changed by direct order of Stalin.

What is most interesting, Rokossovsky, it seems, at some point tried to convince himself What he was indeed born in Velikiye Luki, and after the war, already when he was the Minister of National Defense of Poland, he sent a request there, trying to find out his own ancestry. However, it is likely that Konstantin Konstantinovich never doubted the place of his birth, and the request was made only so that his negative result convinced the Polish comrades that the marshal was really born in Warsaw. After all, when Rokossovsky was sent to serve in Poland, he again began to indicate Warsaw as the place of birth. When are the Poles not too

delicately sent Konstantin Konstantinovich back to the USSR, he again chose place of his birth Russian Velikiye Luki.

It is worth paying attention to another obvious inconsistency. Both Konstantin's older sister Maria and the younger Helena were born in Warsaw, or at least in the territory of the Kingdom of Poland. Why did the family of a railroad worker who worked on the Riga-Oryol railway suddenly settle in Poland? After all, the mentioned road was quite far from the Polish lands. If we assume that at the time of the birth of the children, the head of the family was already working on the Warsaw-Vienna railway, then it becomes absolutely incomprehensible what brought him to the Pskov region, and even with his pregnant wife. After all, no fool would go from Warsaw to Vienna through Velikiye Luki, and the families of railway workers usually settled at the stations of the road where they worked. Moreover, the railway passed through Velikiye Luki only in 1898, two years after the date of Rokossovsky's birth adopted in Soviet times. But it is not known whether he knew about this fact

Konstantin
Konstantinovich.

In fact, the birthplace of the future marshal was either Warsaw or some other city in the territory of the Kingdom of Poland. What we know for sure is that at birth Constantine was baptized in Orthodoxy. This follows from the documents of his subsequent service in the 5th Kargopol Dragoon Regiment, including the presentation for the award of the soldier Georgy. This circumstance should not surprise anyone. Until 1905,

according to

current legislation, in the case of marriage of a Catholic in the public service, with the Orthodox, their children had to be baptized in the Orthodox faith, otherwise their father would lose his position. Konstantin's father Xavier was either a machinist or an auditor, and therefore, he was in the civil service. Although the Warsaw-Vienna road, like almost all the railways of the Russian Empire, was in concession from private capital, the railway workers were considered civil servants and wore uniform plaques with the imperial coat of arms - a double-headed eagle.

Here is what the encyclopedic dictionary "Granat" reported about Warsaw of that era, when there lived

Konstantin Rokossovsky: "The population of Warsaw is progressing very quickly in its growth and in this respect it is ranked third among the cities of Russia (St. Petersburg, Moscow, Warsaw). The total population is about 785,000 (1913), of which 36,000 are Orthodox, 400,000 Catholics, 20,000 Protestants, and 254,000 Jews; the rest of the population are Armenian Gregorians,

Mohammedans and

etc. In Warsaw there are: a university, technological and veterinary institutes, 7 male gymnasiums, 2 pro-gymnasiums, several real, commercial and secondary technical schools, a cadet corps, a teacher's seminary, an institute for noble maidens, 4 women's

gymnasium and

commercial school; there are more than 180 city schools. There are more than 20 Orthodox churches in the city (with brownies). In one of them, most likely, the future marshal was baptized. The Rokossovsky family at the time of his

born on the right bank of the Vistula, in Prague, on Staleva Street, 5.

As we can see, there were not so few Orthodox in Warsaw - about 5 percent of the population.

However, among the Orthodox population of the city, not Poles, but Russians prevailed - families

officials and officers. Most of the Poles were compatriots who accepted

Orthodoxy, wary, seeing in them agents of Russia - the country that deprived Poland

independence

and pursued a policy of Russification at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Even teaching in

Polish gymnasiums for a long time were conducted exclusively in Russian. Only after the revolution of 1905 was teaching in Polish partially restored; at

the same time, private men's gymnasiums were allowed.

It should be said that there are obvious inaccuracies in the data of the Marshal's autobiography of 1940. His father Xavier Jozef did not die in 1905, but

on October 17, 1902, and was buried on October 20 at the Brudnow Cemetery in Warsaw. The granite tombstone, which still adorns the grave, was

installed by the marshal in the early 1950s. According to the memoirs of Helena Rokossovskaya, my father never fully recovered from the

consequences of a railway accident, which he got into in a few

years before death. She remembered a photograph of her father next to an overturned train.

Another inaccuracy is about the four-year city school, which Rokossovsky allegedly graduated from. In fact, Konstantin

either did not graduate from

college at all, or graduated, but

did not pass the final exams.

Why do I say so? Here's why.

In the candidate card for holding command positions in the Red Army, filled out on April 22, 1920, Rokossovsky signed up as Konstantin

Konstantinovich, getting rid of

from

an unusual patronymic for the Russian ear Ksaverievich (the Poles have no patronymics at all). He indicated the date and place of his birth: December 8, 1896,

Warsaw. Here the date was indicated according to the old style (Julian calendar) in force in the Russian Empire. According to the new style - this is 20

December, but subsequently Rokossovsky always celebrated his birthday on December 21, that is, on the 8th according to the Julian calendar. In the same

candidate card, he said that he had completed five classes

gymnasium. Its name is written illegibly and reads like "Fronazzowska" or "Brzezinski".

If the last reading is correct, then Rokossovsky, most likely, had in mind the First Men's Gymnasium, the director of which in 1911 was the

real state councilor Alexander Alekseevich Brzezinski.

To the question: "When did he enter the military service and how: by lot, as a hunter or volunteer, or was he released from the school?" - Rokossovsky answered: "On August 2, 1914, volunteers of the 5th Kargopol Dragoon Regiment." Here the marshal added a little, because, as the documents show, he joined the regiment not as a volunteer, but as a volunteer (hunter), since he did not have the necessary educational qualification for a volunteer. Now he has raised this qualification.

It would seem that this questionnaire confirms not only the date and place of birth of the future marshal, but also his rather high educational qualification by the time he entered the service in the Red Army. It turned out that he graduated from not even four, but five classes of the gymnasium, and therefore he entered the tsarist army in 1914 as a volunteer. According to the encyclopedic dictionary of Brockhaus and Efron, "those who wish to enter the service of volunteers must meet the following conditions: 1) be at least 17 years old and, in case of minority, provide consent from their parents or guardians; 2) fit in your health and physique

the conditions established for admission to military service, and 3) to have an appropriate certificate of education received.

In the same candidate card, Rokossovsky said that in the last received military

rank served "in the old army as a volunteer junior non-commissioned officer from August 5 to October 1917." Here he again lied: he served as a "hunter" (a simple volunteer who did not have the necessary educational qualification and the rights of a volunteer), and was promoted to junior non-commissioned officer only on March 29, 1917. None of the lists of personnel of the 5th Dragoon Kargopol Regiment for 1914-1917 Konstantin Ksaverievich Rokossovsky

never called "volunteer", but only "hunter".

This fact can mean only one thing: at the time of admission to the 5th Kargopol regiment, Konstantin

Rokossovsky did not graduate from a four-year city school, which would give him the right to become a volunteer and get rid of at least such an unpleasant army service as

economic work.

From the point of view of the version that Rokossovsky was born in December 1896, the assertion that he entered the service of volunteers seemed quite logical: volunteers were taken into the army starting at the age of seventeen, and Rokossovsky in August 1914 should

was just turning seventeen. But the trouble is: in the order for the 5th Dragoon Kargopol Regiment of August 5, 1914, a completely different year of birth was called. This order read:

"The peasant of the Groecki district of the village of Dlugovole, the commune of Rykaly, Vaclav Yulianov Strunkevich, enrolled in the warriors of the State militia of the first category in 1911, and the tradesman of the commune of Komarovo, Ostrovsky district, Konstantin Ksaverievich Rokossovsky (so. - B.S.), born in 1894, are enrolled in the service to the regiment entrusted to me by private hunters, of which enroll in the lists of the regiment and allowance from this date with the appointment of both in the 6th squadron.

Vladislav Kardashov, the author of the first Soviet biography of Rokossovsky (published in 1972 and very good at that time), found and published this order. tried

explain the contradiction that arose as follows: "Apparently, Konstantin Rokossovsky's desire to join the regiment was great, since for this he had to add, on the advice of senior comrade Vatslav Strankevich, two whole years - in fact, in August 1914, the young volunteer was not even 18 years old, and At that time, only persons who had reached the age of 21 were called up to the Russian army. Here it must be added that a hunter was a person who entered the army earlier than the time of their conscription, but did not have a sufficient educational level in order to become a volunteer. Therefore, hunters were taken into the army from the age of twenty and they had the privilege of choosing the type of troops.

It should be noted that in the order Rokossovsky was called a "philistine communes

Komarovo. On the territory of this commune, he never lived, and it was not required. According to the then existing legislation, the ancestors of Rokossovsky were assigned to the Komarovskiy philistines after they were deprived of the nobility. In the Ostrovsky district, in the town of Stoky, in particular, the marshal's grandfather, Jan Vincenty

Rokossovsky, lived for some time, some of his children were born there. It is unlikely that Konstantin Rokossovsky knew for sure to which commune his father and himself were assigned. Most likely, these data were gleaned from Rokossovsky's passport. They couldn't accept a person into the regiment without documents at all - after all, he could

turn out to be a deserter, a fugitive criminal, an enemy spy, or simply a person already subject to conscription, and therefore not entitled to enter the regiment as a hunter. The fact that the year of birth of Vaclav Strunkevich was not indicated in the order is understandable: the regiment commander was primarily interested in the attitude of newly recruited hunters to military service. Strankevich, undoubtedly, presented a certificate of registration stating that in 1911 he was enrolled in the warriors

militias of the 1st

category. This category of persons liable for military service was not subject to a priority call after the announcement of general mobilization and was generally not

subject to conscription into regular troops, but was only supposed to replace reserve troops sent to the front in the rear, so Strankevich could enter the service

as a hunter (volunteer). Rokossovsky, born in 1894, was subject to conscription only in 1915, therefore, he had every right to join the army as a hunter.

But let's believe for a moment, following Kardashov, that Rokossovsky really aged himself two years to get into the war, and that the commander of the 5th

Kargopol regiment
colonel

Arthur Schmidt and his adjutant lieutenant Sergei Lomikovsky were so naive that they did not ask

rookie no documents. But all the same, Konstantin Rokossovsky could not have been born in 1896 - and the argument here is completely reinforced concrete, more precisely, granite.

The fact is that the younger sister of Konstantin Helena Rokossovskaya, as evidenced by the granite slab on her grave at the Brudnovsky cemetery in Warsaw, was

born on August 16, 1896

and passed away

July 22, 1982 Marshal's great-granddaughter Ariadna Konstantinovna, on one of her visits to Warsaw, took a color photograph of Helena's grave.

And here at Ada's apartment we are together with her

father, grandson of Marshal Konstantin Vilyevich Rokossovsky, we examine the inscription on the tombstone through a large magnifying glass. From a

distance, the date of birth looks like "18 USh 1898", but on closer inspection it reads "1896" quite confidently. To clarify the issue, I wrote to my Warsaw

friend, the historian Tomasz Bohun, and asked him to go to the Brudnovskoye cemetery, find Helena's grave there and clarify what the date of birth is there.

And Tomas wrote me 15

January 2009, that the date of birth of the marshal's late sister is August 16, 1896 (which means that we read August 18 incorrectly from the photograph), and

she is entered in the computer database of the Brudnovsky cemetery. True, in the photographs that were sent to us from Warsaw, the year of Helena's death on the slab is now read as 1898. It seems that since the grave was photographed by Ariadna Rokossovskaya, the inscription on the slab has

been updated, while hardly looking into the cemetery card file. But in the archive of Konstantin Vilyevich there was a photograph of the funeral

Helena

Rokossovskaya. There, a plate on the coffin is clearly visible, on which it is clearly read: "Helena Rokossovskaya, lived 86 years. 24.UP.1982 "(July 24 - date of

burial). This unambiguously points to 1896 as the year of Helena's birth.

Thus, there is no doubt left. Helena Rokossovskaya was indeed born in August 1896. But this absolutely unequivocally proves that the future marshal in no case could not to be born in December of the same year - no one has yet repealed the laws of biology. You can, of course, jokingly assume that Helena and Konstantin were twins and Konstantin just stayed in the womb for more than four months, but this will only be a joke. It can even be seriously assumed that the brother and sister were indeed twins, and the future marshal was actually born on the same day as his sister Helena, that is, on August 16, 1896, but such an assumption is certainly not true. After all, the rather unusual fact of the birth of twins could not help but be remembered by the relatives of the future marshal, including the same Helena. But there are no hints of this either in her memoirs or in family traditions.

So when was Konstantin Rokossovsky born? Assuming that he was in fact younger than his sister Helena, the earliest possible date for his birth is the end of 1897. However, then it is completely incomprehensible why Konstantin Konstantinovich, at the beginning of his service in the Red Army, made himself older than he really was. After all, at that moment he was already set for a military career, and from this point of view, it is more profitable to be younger, and not older than you really are: the time for going to the reserve and retiring is moving away, and you become a more promising shot in the eyes of your superiors. In the era of revolution and civil war

very many people, taking advantage of the confusion that arose, changed the dates of their birth. However, they did this, as a rule, in the direction of rejuvenation, since it seemed to them to improve their career and marriage prospects. At the same time, the educational qualification was often lowered so that a person would not be suspected of belonging to the propertied classes of the population, who had a much better chance of giving their children an education. In this case, the shift of the year of birth to a later one made it possible to hide the years of the biography spent in the senior classes of the gymnasium. For example, the "steel people's commissar" Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov, for this reason, apparently, rejuvenated himself by two or three years.

Rokossovsky, on the other hand, acted rather non-standard, not underestimating, but overestimating his educational qualification and making himself a volunteer. This could make vigilant commissars doubt his proletarian origin, but it opened up good career prospects. After all, Rokossovsky had already been a member of the RCP (b) since March 1919, and among the commanders who joined the party

At that time, few could boast of the Red Army even with five grades of a gymnasium. WITH
so

education, one could hope that you would be approved for the post of regiment commander, despite your youth, which happened to
Rokossovsky.

It is worth adding here that Helena Rokossovskaya considered herself the younger, and not the older sister of Konstantin, all her life. It's
hard to imagine that she
could be wrong here. Therefore, the only correct assumption is that the marshal was born earlier than his sister. Then the earliest date of his
birth may
be the middle of 1895. But December 1894 lies very close to this time - it seems that Rokossovsky did not make any sense to distort the
month of his birth.
The year 1894, as we remember, also appears in the order to enroll Konstantin Rokossovsky in the 5th Kargopol Dragoon Regiment. It
also correlates well
with the fact that Konstantin's older sister, Maria, was born in 1892. Therefore, we can assume that Konstantin Ksaverievich
Rokossovsky was born
in Warsaw on December 8 (20), 1894 - two years earlier than the date indicated in all dictionaries and encyclopedias. However, this date is
also
rather arbitrary: in Russia then, and in Poland today, most often they celebrated not a birthday, but the day of an angel, which usually
fell on the
same month, but rarely on the same day. Therefore, Rokossovsky could not remember the exact day of his birth at all.

It will be possible to find out absolutely exactly the birthday of Konstantin Rokossovsky if a record of his birth is found in the parish
book. Therefore, we
must try to find in the archives the parish books of that Orthodox church in Warsaw, in which Rokossovsky was baptized. In 1894,
there were the following
Orthodox churches in Warsaw: Holy Trinity Cathedral (Dolga Street, 15), Holy Trinity Church on Podvalnaya Street, 5; Holy
Assumption
Church (Honey Street, 14), Mary Magdalene Church in Prague (corner of Torgovaya Street and the alley, which is now called the Alley
of Solidarity), St. Vladimir's Church in the cemetery (suburb Wola). Rokossovsky was baptized in one of them, most likely in Holy
Trinity. But it is
hardly worth hoping that anything can be found in the archives - the two world wars had the most detrimental effect on the state of the
Polish
archives. Part of them

was evacuated to Russia in 1915. Many suffered during the fighting in Warsaw in September 1939 and the 1944 uprising. It is possible that
the birth
record of Konstantin Rokossovsky

has long been reduced to ashes.

Interestingly, Marshal Georgy Konstantinovich Zhukov, a friend and rival of Rokossovsky, who was born on November 19 (December 1), 1896, was sure all his life that he was younger than him, albeit only three weeks. But in fact, Rokossovsky was almost two years older than him.

Let us now say a few words about Konstantin's elder sister, Maria. Little is known about her fate after her father's death. When Rokossovsky, shortly after joining the regiment, visited his relatives, they told him that Maria had married. She died in evacuation in Russia in 1915 or 1916, which Konstantin told his sister Helena when he met her in 1945 in liberated Warsaw from the Germans. Since she was evacuated, it can be assumed that her husband was a Russian official or officer. Let me remind you that she, like other children of Xavier, was Orthodox. It is not known if Mary had children. Perhaps she died in childbirth, which was not uncommon. But, who knows, perhaps the descendants of Maria Rokossovskaya now live in Russia or somewhere in France or America, if Maria's husband was lucky enough to emigrate. However, to find these

relatives of the famous marshal is a difficult matter. After all, we still do not know the name of Mary's husband. In Soviet times, Rokossovsky never indicated in questionnaires that he had close relatives in Poland (this was a rather dangerous point, fraught with trouble) and until 1945 did not know anything about the fate of the sisters.

We know about the life of Konstantin Rokossovsky until 1914 mainly from the memoirs of his sister Helena. She writes that after the death of his father, his relatives took Maria and Konstantin away from their mother in order to educate them in the Polish spirit. It is characteristic that in the Soviet

Rokossovsky in the questionnaires in the column "nationality" wrote "Pole", and in the column "mother tongue" - "Russian". He learned this language from his mother. Having lost her husband, Antonina was forced to go to work at a knitting factory on Shirokaya Street. According to another version, she never worked at the factory, and after the death of her husband, she immediately left with her youngest daughter for her homeland, in Telekhany, where she lived until her death.

After the death of her mother Helena, her aunt Vladislava Ioanna took her to Petersburg, where she was married to some official, but they had no children. And Konstantin immediately after the death of his father

adopted by the younger brother of Xavier Alexander, the owner of a prestigious dental clinic at Marshalkovskaya, 151.

He was a good dentist, had an extensive practice among

wealthy Varsovians and was even able to buy the Pulapin estate, where Konstantin visited summer and

learned to ride well. For his passion for horseback riding, friends nicknamed Rokossovsky "Bedouin". They gave him postcards with photos of his favorite jockeys, signed: "Our Bedouin."

Uncle Alexander placed the orphaned nephew in the prestigious private school of Anton Laguna (Sventokrzyska, 25). Konstantin was taken care of by his grandmother Constance, who lived with her youngest daughter Stephanie Davidovskaya (Marshalkovskaya, 117). At the end of 1906, Alexander

Rokossovsky died suddenly - he was only forty-eight years old. After that, the youngest of the Rokossovsky brothers, Mikhail, took care of the maintenance of his nephew. He arranged Konstantin in the gymnasium of the Merchant Assembly at the corner of Valicow and Twardoy streets, the pupils of which wore uniform caps with a green band. It is possible that

this and

was the gymnasium that Rokossovsky named in his 1920 candidate card.

In his memoirs, Konstantin Konstantinovich admitted that "from his youthful years he was fond of military history literature, which reflected the development of military art, starting with the campaigns of Alexander the Great and the Roman generals ...". According to Helena, Konstantin was especially

fascinated by the military-historical novels of Valery Przyborovsky "The Swedes in Warsaw" and "The Battle of Raszyn". Military romance eventually

led him to the Russian cavalry and determined his life choices.

On August 24, 1909, forty-seven-year-old Mikhail Rokossovsky also died. He was buried next to Alexander in the family vault at the prestigious Powazki

Cemetery in Warsaw. Konstantin was forced to part with the gymnasium. As we remember, he did not receive an education even in the volume of a

four-year city school. Why this happened is still not clear. It is possible that the remaining relatives did not consider it possible to pay for the education of their

nephew, although among them were quite wealthy people, such as Stefan Vysotsky (more on him below). But, perhaps, Konstantin himself did not want to continue

his studies, preferring instead

classical

education to get a good profession in his uncle's workshop, with which you could always earn yourself a sure piece of bread and butter.

Konstantin moved to his father's sister, Sofya Vysotskaya, who lived at 11 Konopatskaya Street. An aunt moved to the neighboring four-story stone house on Karbovskaya Street

Stefania with her husband Mieczysław Davidowski. The thought of returning to his mother obviously did not occur to Konstantin, although she was still alive. Antonina Rokossovskaya died only at the beginning of 1911, according to some sources, from tuberculosis. She must have been in a lot of pain by then. It is possible that some kind of shadow ran between Konstantin and his mother. The following circumstance seems to be characteristic: after Rokossovsky returned to Poland in 1945, he

erected a monument on the grave of his father, but never found the grave of his mother. And we still don't know exactly where Antonina Rokossovskaya is buried. According to one version - in one of the Warsaw cemeteries. According to another, more plausible, she rests in her native village of Telekhana. After World War II, when

Rokossovsky was in Poland, he received a letter from local residents who introduced themselves as relatives of Antonina Ovsyannikova (Rokossovskaya). They claimed that the marshal's mother was buried in Telekhany, but for some reason in a Catholic cemetery, and indicated a specific grave. They also asked what the marshal knew about the fate of his mother after the death of his father. Konstantin Konstantinovich replied that at the time of his father's death he was too small and therefore did not remember what happened to his mother. According to the memoirs of his grandson Konstantin Vilyevich, in the cemetery

V
Telekhanakh marshal never visited. Obviously, he doubted that there was really buried his mother.

Meanwhile, it cannot be ruled out that after the death of her husband, Antonina Rokossovskaya came out again

married a Pole or a Belarusian Catholic, and therefore her grave was on catholic cemetery. If this hypothesis is confirmed, she may explain why her children ended up with Xavier's relatives.

Konstantin went to work. At first, he allegedly was an assistant to a confectioner, then an assistant to a dentist, but he quarreled with the owner and went as a worker to a hosiery factory on Shirokaya Street. However, it cannot be ruled out that Konstantin did not actually work at this factory, as well as at the dentist and confectioner, but immediately went as a stonemason's apprentice to the workshop owned by Aunt Sophia's husband Stefan Vysotsky (2 Strshelefskaya Street). In his 1940 autobiography, Rokossovsky attributed this event to 1911. However, in this autobiography, as in all others, he made himself two years younger than he actually was, and accordingly moved some other dates, for example, the death of his father, which he attributed to 1905. It is quite likely that exactly

in the same way, Konstantin Konstantinovich also shifted the time of the beginning of his work in his uncle's

workshop. It is quite logical that, having moved after the death of Mikhail Rokossovsky to the Vysotskys at the end of 1909, Rokossovsky then began working in a stone-cutting workshop. In December 1909, he was just about to turn fifteen years old, and he was physically developed beyond his years. As for the hosiery factory, Konstantin Konstantinovich could write solely to reinforce his proletarian pedigree.

If my assumption is correct that Konstantin got a job in a stone-cutting workshop in 1909, then by the time he entered the military service he had already worked as a stone-cutter for about five years.

years. It is not surprising that colleagues spoke of him as an experienced and skilled craftsman. The workshop produced tombstones (it was here that the granite crypt of the Rokossovskys at the Powazki cemetery was made), stone fences, and was engaged in facing buildings and structures. In particular, it was Vysotsky's workshop that received an order for the manufacture of stone cladding for the five-hundred-meter Nikolai P Bridge (now the Poniatowski Bridge). But soon the workshop had to be transferred to the town of Gruets (Groets), 35 kilometers southwest of Warsaw, where it was easier to get raw materials. Together with her, grandmother Constance and Konstantin's sister Maria moved to Gruets. For some time in the same place, at 12 Varetskaya Street, the younger sister Helena also lived. About a year later, the Rokossovskys moved to Mogelnitskaya, 12 (this house has not survived to our time).

Following the example of other masters, Konstantin carved his initials on the made monuments. Probably, tombstones made by him in the cemeteries of Warsaw, Grójec, Mroglinica and Goshcin are still preserved today. Stefan Vysotsky's son Roman and Konstantin's sister Elena testified that in the Vysotsky family they took care of the Rokossovsky orphans in every way, tried to create maximum comfort for them. According to the memoirs of the old-timers of Gruets, Konstantin loved to sing, dance and played the harmonica quite well. It can be assumed that the almost two-meter handsome stonemason had no end to the fans.

There is a legend that first appeared in the biography of the marshal, written by V. I. Kardashov, that Rokossovsky was arrested for participating in the May Day demonstration of 1912 in Warsaw, when he tried to hide the red banner torn down by the gendarmes in his bosom. Konstantin allegedly spent two months (according to another version, voiced by the Polish biographers of Rokossovsky Tadeusz Konecki and Ireneusz Rushkevich - only six weeks) spent in Pawiak prison. Then it

allegedly released because he was not sixteen years old, but he was fired from the knitting factory. Konetsky and Rushkevich claim that the fact that Konstantin was vouched for by his uncle Mieczysław Davydovsky played a role.

This version is highly doubtful, although the marshal himself confirms it. In his 1940 autobiography, Rokossovsky wrote that "for participating in the May Day demonstration in 1912, he was subjected to a month's imprisonment." However, in the same autobiography, Konstantin Konstantinovich wrote: "I started working independently in 1909. He worked as a worker at a hosiery factory in Warsaw (a suburb of Prague) until 1911 and from 1911 until August 1914 he worked

stonemason on

Vysotsky's factory in the city of Groitsy, Warsaw province. If all this information is true, then Rokossovsky's participation in the May Day demonstration becomes very

dubious. It turns out that in 1912 he was no longer in Warsaw and they could not fire him from the hosiery factory for participating in the demonstration, since he himself left there a year earlier. In Grójec, a tiny town of just over five thousand people, no May Day demonstrations took place until 1917. It is rather difficult to imagine that Rokossovsky went from Grójec to Warsaw to take part in the demonstration. At

workers of a large hosiery factory, which, quite possibly, were trade unions and cells of revolutionary parties, participation in the demonstration looked quite natural as a struggle for their rights. But the situation in the stone-cutting workshop was completely different. Stonecutters were actually not workers, but artisans. Their work was hard, no doubt, but

they earned very well, much more than workers in a hosiery factory. And there was no need for them to fight against the owner - with his ruin, they lost a profitable job. Indeed, alone it was much more difficult to look for orders and the income of the masters would have sharply decreased. Moreover, the economic crises did not significantly affect the stone-cutting workshop - after all, people still continued to die and they needed tombstones. For Konstantin, the workshop was, one might say, a family business: it was owned by the husband of his own aunt, against whom he was hardly going to fight. By the way, Georgy Konstantinovich Zhukov worked at exactly the same "family" enterprise, with his furrier uncle, before the First World War,

whose

Rokossovsky has always been a rival in popularity.

Most likely, Rokossovsky did not participate in any demonstration, and he wrote about the arrest and imprisonment, as well as about working at the factory, only to improve his personal data. Then, in the last track record, preserved in the personal file of Rokossovsky, information about the beginning of his working biography was corrected for the version of participation in the May Day demonstration, arrest and dismissal from the factory:
"1910 - May 1912 - a worker in a hosiery factory on the outskirts of Warsaw, Prague. June 1912 - August 1914 - stonemason in the workshop of Stefan Vysotsky, Groets, Warsaw province.

However, there is no reason to believe that in his 1940 autobiography, Rokossovsky deliberately postponed the start of work in his uncle's workshop from 1912 to an earlier date. Rather, he, on the contrary, moved this date to a later date, along with the two years by which he reduced his age.

Archival materials can finally confirm or refute the version of Rokossovsky's arrest in 1912. Fortunately, the archive of the Warsaw provincial gendarme department has been preserved and is located in the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) in Moscow. Those who wish can find materials of interrogations on the May Day demonstrations there and establish whether Konstantin Rokossovsky was among the detainees. If found, we have a chance to get a good early photograph of the future marshal - all those arrested were photographed without fail. So far, there are very few such photos, as well as details of Polish youth.

Rokossovsky - quite ordinary and saying nothing about the future brilliant career of a commander.

Chapter Two IN THE TRENCHES OF THE FIRST WORLD

Note that in the First World War and earlier, many Rokossovskys served in the Russian army. Among them were officers, generals, nobles. It is difficult to say whether they were even in distant relationship with our hero.

Here is just one dramatic story. The archive preserved the "Report on the appointment of a pension to the widow of the drowned bathing in the war on May 26, 1915, the captain of the 1st Grenadier Artillery Brigade, Baron Alexei Alekseevich Rokossovsky, Baroness Anna Pavlovna Rokossovskaya",

compiled by the district military commander in Helsingfors on July 17, 1915. The widow lived in Helsingfors, at 15 Bermanskaya Street. In a petition filed by Anna Pavlovna ("28 years old, no children") addressed to the district chief on June 30, 1915, it was said: "My husband drowned in a real war while swimming from heart paralysis, and therefore

the following documents and a sheet of additional information with the answers put down in it, I ask Your Highness's petition for the assignment of the pension due to me ...

When determining the amount of the pension, please bear in mind the following circumstances: 1) My husband, while serving in the office of the Finnish Governor-General, not by conscription, but voluntarily transferred to the active army in order to give his life for the fatherland;

2) For military distinctions, he was promoted to staff captain and awarded the Order of St. Anna with swords and a bow;

3) In November 1914, my husband was wounded in the arm and leg during the battle, and Also shell-shocked, which had serious consequences for his health;

4) Still far from recovering, he entered service again in January 1915;

5) The death of her husband from paralysis of the heart, undoubtedly, was the result of his wounds and shell shock, since before leaving for the war he had a strong and healthy body.

According to the track record of August 15, 1915, A. A. Rokossovsky was born | March 1886. He came from hereditary nobles of the Petrograd province and was of the Orthodox faith. Alexey Alekseevich graduated from the elite Corps of Pages, which indirectly indicates that his parents were wealthy people and with a position in society.

On December 23, 1914, Baron Rokossovsky was promoted to staff captain, and "for differences in business from October 21 to December 1, 1914" was awarded the Order of St. Anna, 3rd degree. On May 26, 1915, he stole in the Ilzhanka River. On the eve of his death, the 2nd senior officer of the 1st battery A. A. Rokossovsky was on a business trip in Ivangorod (Modlin) to receive artillery. It is possible that his death was directly related to this. His death while swimming is very similar to suicide. After all, the water at this time of the year in Polish rivers is still too cold for swimming. It can be assumed that the baron squandered or lost government money in cards

or became

a victim of unhappy love, and the version of the accident suited everyone - both the authorities and relatives. However, it is unlikely that we will ever know the true circumstances of his last business trip.

But the fact that in her petition the widow of Rokossovsky somewhat embellished the real track record of her husband, we know for sure today. In his real service record dated August 15, 1915, it was noted that the 29-year-old staff captain "was not wounded and shell-shocked", and on November 8, 1914 he was evacuated "inside the empire" due to illness and after recovery returned to his brigade only 10 February 1915. It is not known whether, having arrived home on vacation or in letters to his wife, Alexei Alekseevich added about wounds and shell shock, or whether she herself turned the illness into a combat wound in order to secure a larger pension for herself. The War Department noted

This discrepancy, but they took into account that Aleksey Alekseevich was a military officer and, although he died in battle, the widow's pension was eventually given an increased one.

It should be noted that the Rokossovsky barons owned an estate in the Velikiye Luki region, which in the future, in all likelihood, influenced the choice of the birthplace for the Soviet Marshal Rokossovsky. This branch of the

Rokossovsky family came from the Vitebsk province, where they

appeared, most likely, in the 17th century. When their ancestor, Ivan Nikitich Rokossovsky, in 1778 needed to confirm his nobility, he turned to the Crown Chancellor in Warsaw and the Poznań Archbishop, who confirmed that the Rokossovsky family had been known in Poland since ancient times and many of its representatives held high government positions.

Incidentally, the canon of the Archbishop of Poznań was at that time priest Jozef Rokossovsky. By the way, the brother of Alexei Alekseevich, who died in 1915, Baron Platon Alekseevich Rokossovsky, served as a midshipman in the White fleet in Arkhangelsk, was captured and shot by the Reds in 1919 or 1920. So, theoretically, in the battles of the Civil War, representatives of the Rokossovsky family could also fight against each other.

On his service in the tsarist army, in his candidate card dated April 22, 1920, Rokossovsky wrote: "A volunteer junior non-commissioned officer from August 2, 1914. until December 1917. On participation in hostilities, Konstantin

Konstantinovich wrote: "In the German war from August 2, 1914. uninterrupted presence at the front. As we

remember, Rokossovsky volunteered for the 5th Kargopol Dragoon Regiment. Probably, he was primarily attracted by military romance. Perhaps patriotism, both Russian and

Polish. In the "Appeal to the Poles" published on August 1/14, 1914, the Supreme Commander of the Russian Army, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich, promised to provide

Poland broad autonomy with the accession of the Polish provinces of Austria and Germany: "Poles, the hour has come when the cherished dream of your fathers and grandfathers can come true. A century and a half ago, the living body of Poland was torn to pieces, but her soul did not die. She lived in the hope that the hour would come for the resurrection of the Polish people, for her fraternal reconciliation with great Russia. Russian troops bring you the good news of this reconciliation. Let the borders that cut into pieces be erased

Polish people. May he be united under the scepter of the Russian Tsar! Under this scepter, Poland will be reunited, free in her faith, in her language, in self-government. Of course, the tsar's uncle did not specify that the body of the Polish eagle was tormented with the most active participation of Russia and its rulers.

It is characteristic that, although the order to enroll Rokossovsky in the regiment was dated August 5, in the candidate card he indicated the day of admission to the tsarist army on August 2, the day after the appearance of the "Appeal to the Poles". Konstantin considered himself a Pole nationality and Russian in language and religion. Without a doubt, he thought of the future of Poland in close unity with Russia and was ready to fight against Germany and Austria-Hungary, in which he sincerely saw enemies of his homeland.

But, of course, in entering the military service as a volunteer (hunter) there was also a calculation. Next year, Konstantin Rokossovsky would still have to be drafted into the army. Entering the service as a volunteer gave the important privilege of choosing the type of troops, and Konstantin wanted to serve only in the cavalry.

Rokossovsky had a chance to fight first on the North-Western Front in Poland, and then on the North in the Baltic States. The commander of the 5th Kargopol Dragoon Regiment, when Rokossovsky entered there, was Colonel Artur Adolfovich Schmidt. Schmidt ended the war as a major general, commander of the 2nd brigade of the 6th cavalry division, and after the revolution he returned to his native Riga.

Shortly after joining the regiment, Konstantin Rokossovsky accomplished his first feat. V. I. Kardashov describes it as follows: "The 5th Cavalry Division slowly moved towards the enemy. On August 8, advanced patrols of the Kargopol regiment were found near the settlement

Novo-Miasto on the Pilica River cavalry units of the enemy, but could not determine

their

numbers and intentions. There was a need for reconnaissance. A young dragoon volunteered to lead it. In the evening, in civilian

clothes, he went to the town, calmly, as if on a walk, walked along its streets, talked with the inhabitants and managed to find out that

it was occupied by a German cavalry regiment. The insolence of the scout was liked by the authorities, the information brought

by him was confirmed, and Konstantin Rokossovsky received his first military award - the St. George Cross of the 4th

degree for No. 9841.

As you wish, but the feat turns out to be rather strange. It turns out that Rokossovsky acted like a banal scout. If he had been caught, he

would have been hanged as a spy for violating the laws of war - after all, he conducted intelligence in civilian clothes.

But in fact,

our hero accomplished a completely normal military feat, and in Kardashov's text, only the number of the cross that Rokossovsky was

awarded is correct. In the list of the lower ranks of the 5th Dragoon Kargopol Regiment, presented for awards for distinction shown in

long-range reconnaissance from July 29 to August 8 and the battle near the Novo-Miasto settlement on August 11, there is a dragoon-hunter of the 6th squadron Konstantin Rokossovsky, of the Orthodox faith, not in the category of fined, not having awards. His

feat, according to the description, was as follows: "Being a sentinel at the junction and entering the village of Yastrzhem, he stumbled upon

an infantry outpost, which began to shoot at him, and from the other side a German cavalryman rushed at him;

dragoon

Rokossovsky, having shown great composure under the fire of the outpost, hacked to death the German lancer who flew up to

him with a saber and, galloping to the siding, warned him in time of the danger, thanks to which the sergeant avoided the trap.

Rokossovsky was introduced to the Insignia of the Military Order (Georgievsky Cross) of the 4th degree with renaming to corporals on the

basis of the clauses of Article 67 of the St. George Statute, which read: "17) Who, being a scout, with a clear personal danger,

will get and deliver important information about enemy intelligence; 18) Who, being in secret, in a separate outpost or at a forward

point, being surrounded by the enemy, with obvious personal danger, breaks through and joins his

parts." However, on August 30, a note was received from the headquarters of the 5th Cavalry Division to the commander of the

5th Kargopol Dragoon Regiment demanding that "the list be returned for revision

And

secondary submission according to the personal instructions of the head of the division! 1.

Obviously, the second presentation of the division commander did not meet with objections, and Rokossovsky, among others, was awarded the soldier George of the 4th degree. The order for the 9th Army of October 28, 1914, No. 28, signed by the commander of the army, General of Infantry P. A. Lechitsky, said: "Based on Art. 78 and 152 of the statutes of the Imperial Military Order of the Holy Great Martyr and Victorious George, for the differences rendered at different times in cases against the Austrians and Germans, I award the lower ranks named in the list attached to this list with St. George's crosses and medals. In this list, in the section devoted to the lower ranks of the 5th Kargopol Dragoon Regiment, among those awarded with St. George's Crosses of the 4th degree under No. 6,

"hunter

Konstantin Rokossovsky. The number of the cross given to him was also named here - 9841. In description

feat, in contrast to the original idea, now it was said: "Being a sentinel on the road, going out to the village of Yastrzhem, I stumbled upon an enemy ambush, was surrounded by the enemy, but, having cut down a German cavalryman, made my way to my unit and warned her about the ambush."

At the end of December 1914, the squadron in which Rokossovsky served suffered heavy losses and was taken to rest in the village of Gach near Warsaw. From there, Konstantin received a vacation in Groets. There he saw his relatives and found out that his older sister Maria got married - then she and her brother saw each other for the last time. The losses of officer cadres during the "great retreat" of the Russian army in the spring and autumn of 1915 were very great. Already on September 4, 1915, in the detachment of Lieutenant General N. N. Kaznakov, where Rokossovsky then served, they read out the order of the headquarters of the 5th Army: "Urgently telegraph how many lower ranks from each military unit are intended for ensign schools. They should now be commanded at the disposal of Vitebsk

milestone

commandant with written information and documents on education, and in case of their loss by a part - a certificate of the head of the educational qualification. They can be sent only

combatant lower ranks with the education of a volunteer former 2nd category or

giving the right to production in the first class rank without exams. Regarding the Knights of St. George with a minimum educational qualification, one should telegraph to request the award of the army commander, indicating the degree of education.

Rokossovsky did not have the necessary educational qualification. In practice, relaxations in this

respect were made only to full St. George knights, who were sent to ensign schools and with less than necessary education, but Konstantin

Ksaverievich had only one
St. George Cross.

In the autumn of 1915, a partisan detachment of volunteers was created in the 5th Cavalry Division, which was holding the defense on the Western Dvina. They were
mainly to carry out reconnaissance searches in the enemy's disposition. January 30, 1916 Corporal Konstantin

Savelievich (as they misrepresented in the lists of Ksaverievich) Rokossovsky with a horse named Harpist was listed as part of the partisan
detachment
of the 5th cavalry division.

Rokossovsky received the St. George medal of the 4th degree on July 20, 1915 for distinction in battles near the town of Trashkuny when he was in
the cavalry
detachment of General Kaznakov. For the second time, he was awarded the same degree of the St. George medal by order of the 6th
Cavalry Corps of May 25,
1916 for distinction during a reconnaissance search, but according to the current situation, it was

replaced

St. George medal of the 3rd degree. It is worth noting that soon the partisan detachment called

dissatisfaction with the head of the 5th Cavalry Division, Lieutenant General P. P. Skoropadsky, the future Ukrainian hetman. In the
order for the division

dated March 8, 1916, he noted

By

the results of the review: "The partisan detachment presented itself unsatisfactorily. One impulse is not enough, but it is necessary
that the unit, especially such as a
partisan detachment, be in the hands of the chief. I didn't see this. The most elementary combat formations are performed poorly. The detachment is
not
sufficiently prepared for action in the equestrian ranks. I order Sotnik Alekseev to persistently continue work on the comprehensive preparation
of the detachment.
But Kargopolsky

Paul's regiment

Petrovich was pleased: "In general, I consider the Dragoon Regiment to be perfectly moved in the hands
his
commander."

March 1, 1917, on the eve of the abdication of the throne of Emperor Nicholas II, according to the full name list of the 5th Kargopol Dragoon
Regiment,
dragoons of the 4th squadron Konstantin

Rokossovsky, who had just graduated from the training team, where he was seconded in October 1916, was still listed as assigned to the
divisional partisan
detachment. His cousin Franz at that time served in the 3rd squadron as a hunter, like Konstantin, and was seconded to the division
headquarters. On March
29, 1917, Konstantin Rokossovsky was promoted to junior non-commissioned officer.

On September 26, 1917, junior non-commissioned officer Rokossovsky was presented with the St. George medal of the 2nd degree.
The essence of the feat was as
follows: "On the night of August 23-24, 1917

near metro

station Kronenberg volunteered as a hunter to go to the junction sent along the Pskov highway. Despite the dark night, when the enemy can be detected only by

calling fire on himself with obvious

personal

danger, went to reconnaissance and discovered the enemy's advance in the forest on both sides of the highway. On November 21, 1917, an order was issued for the

5th Cargo-Polish Regiment to award Rokossovsky

St. George medal of the 2nd degree. True, there was a clause in it: "No. St. George's medals will be announced later." It is possible that in the confusion of the time,

the award was completely forgotten to be presented or presented later.

These were the last battles of the First World War, in which the 5th Kargopol regiment participated.

After the speech of Commander-in-Chief LG Kornilov against the Provisional Government and the surrender of Riga to the Germans, the front actually began to fall

apart. Soldiers are tired of sitting in the trenches. The goals of the war were incomprehensible to them, especially after the February Revolution won in the country. The

Provisional Government was expected to end the war, but it undertook to continue it to the bitter end. The cavalymen had to sit in the trenches less

than the foot soldiers. True, in

equestrian

they had to act in formation mainly during reconnaissance searches: machine guns, shrapnel and barbed wire forced the cavalry to dismount. Attacks on horseback were very rare. But still, the cavalry divisions, which were considered elite and shock formations, compared to the infantry divisions, spent

more time in the reserve and less on the front line, so that the decomposition in the cavalry still went more slowly,

than in the infantry.

So, until December 1917, there were no cases of officers being killed in the 5th Cavalry Division.

With the help of the cavalry, the command tried to restore at least some order in the troops. Boss

5th Cavalry Division Major General L. N. Velikopolsky, who was chief

of the Venden garrison (now Cesis in Latvia), on September 30, 1917, he was forced to issue an order, where among the tasks he listed "the cessation of violence and

robberies and the detention of deserters in occupied

division of the region. The squadrons of the 5th Lithuanian Lancers stationed directly in Wenden were instructed to "take energetic measures to establish

strict order in the city and especially at the station during the upcoming transportation of soldiers discharged from service ... these armed marauders.

At the time of the October Revolution, the 5th Cavalry Division was commanded by Major General L. N. Velikopolsky, and the 5th Kargopol Dragoon Regiment was commanded by Colonel Daragan. After the Kornilov rebellion, the Bolsheviks and their then allies, the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, prevailed

in most of the soldiers' committees. Some biographers of Rokossovsky, following V. I. Kardashov, claim that Rokossovsky was part of a squadron or even regimental

committee.

So far, I have not been able to find any traces of the fact that Konstantin Ksaverievich was ever part of at least one of them in the files of the 5th Dragoon

Regiment. For example, on October 25, 1917, when the regimental committee was re-elected, Rokossovsky was not in the new,

neither in

its former composition. The committee was chaired by senior non-commissioned officer Andrei Mikhailovich Ivankin, regimental captain, who, in connection

with the flight of most of the officers, took

Also

regiment command. So the question of whether Rokossovsky was a member of any soldier's committee remains open. In the candidate card dated April 22, 1921, the only elective position that he held, the future marshal named the position of assistant chief of the Kargopol cavalry detachment.

Many Poles served in the 5th Cavalry Division. After it became clear that the tsarist army was dying, they faced a choice: whether to fight for the independence of

Poland or join one

from the warring parties in Russia. They could not simply go home, as most Russian soldiers did: Poland was occupied by Austro-German troops. Konstantin's cousin

Franz Rokossovsky, who served in the 6th squadron, made his choice - he left the regiment and went with his comrades to the Polish Legion that

was being formed in Belarus. On October 27, 1917, Franz Rokossovsky was removed from allowance. He was the son of Konstantin

Rokossovsky, the uncle of the future marshal. According to his recollections

cousin Helena, relatives did not like Franz, considering him too greedy. After returning to Poland, Franz served in the police. He continued this service during the German occupation, but he was not convicted of collaborationism (perhaps he maintained ties with

Polish

underground). After 1945, the Marshal's cousin lived in Wrocław. After Konstantin Konstantinovich became the Minister of Defense of Poland, Franz turned to his eminent brother with a request to confirm in writing their relationship, otherwise the neighbors, and even the authorities

they suspect him of arrogance. It is not known whether Konstantin responded to his brother's request.

He himself, unlike Franz, preferred to stay in Russia and link his fate with the Bolsheviks, in

whom he saw the only political force capable of reviving the army in the future. Thus, he chose his fate. Let's think for a moment: what would happen if Konstantin, following his brother Franz, went to the Polish Legion? Marshal's grandson Konstantin Vilyevich Rokossovsky, in a conversation with me, reasonably suggested that in this case Konstantin Konstantinovich would have a great chance to end up in one of the Katyn graves. In the Polish army, the limit of Rokossovsky's career growth by 1939 would have been a colonel, but, most likely, he would have met the war as a major or lieutenant colonel - there was a lot of competition for officer positions in the Polish Army. Priority was given to those who made a career in the legions of Józef Piłsudski. But besides them, there were quite a few Pole officers from the Austrian and Russian armies (in the latter there were even several generals, unlike the Prussian, where officers from among the Poles

was a bit). It was very difficult for a dragoon non-commissioned officer to compete with them, no matter what military talents he later discovered. In the Red Army, the former tsarist officers and generals in command positions already in the early 1930s remained counted dozens, and a non-commissioned officer who joined the RCP (b) had much more chances to make a military

career.

If Rokossovsky had ended up in the Polish army and survived the Soviet-Polish war of 1920, then in 1939 he could have had several options for his fate. Konstantin Konstantinovich could die in battle with the Germans or, less likely, with the Soviet troops. He also could hit into German captivity and remain in the camp until the end of the war. If he had survived in the camp, he would have either remained in exile in Western Europe or returned to communist Poland. There, Rokossovsky could be arrested as an officer of the "bourgeois" Polish army, or allowed to serve in the Polish Army, but in secondary positions. In any case, having returned to his homeland, he would by no means become a commander. Having remained in Soviet Russia, Konstantin Konstantinovich made a brilliant military career, made a significant contribution to the defeat of Nazi Germany, fulfilled his life mission and went down in history as an outstanding commander.

He was far from alone in his decision. Most of the army supported the Bolshevik revolution. The popularity of Lenin, Trotsky and other Bolshevik leaders grew as the hatred of the war grew among the soldiers. But Constantine seems to

anti-war motives

were by no means in the foreground. I think that he saw in the Bolsheviks the only force

which, unlike the Socialist-Revolutionaries who are corrupting the army's body, will be able to create truly combat-ready military formations. In the candidate card dated April 22, 1920 and in

In subsequent questionnaires, Konstantin Konstantinovich claimed that he joined the Kargopol Red Guard detachment on December 15 (most likely, the old style) 1917, after a truce was concluded on December 2/15 at the front, and on December 9/22, negotiations of representatives Council of People's Commissars with the Germans on the conclusion of peace. But, as we will see later, Rokossovsky, most likely, joined the Red Guard much later, only in March 1918. This was preceded by dramatic events. On February 18, after Trotsky's refusal to sign the enslaving peace treaty, the Austro-German troops launched an offensive, after which the Bolsheviks

put forward the slogan "The socialist fatherland is in danger!" and created the Red Army. Thus, Rokossovsky went to serve under patriotic, and not under communist slogans. Although the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed on March 3, fighting against the Austro-German troops and their allies, the Ukrainian Gaidamaks and the Don Cossacks of the ataman of the CPU. N. Krasnov - continued until May 1918.

The mood of the soldiers of the division in which Rokossovsky served tended to support the Bolshevik coup. Here is the text of the resolution of the divisional meeting of the 5th Cavalry Division, adopted on November 11, 1917 (I retain the punctuation and style of the original):

"The general meeting of the regimental committees of the 5th cavalry division, after listening to the report on the coup on October 24 and 25 and the transfer of all power to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', Peasants' Deputies, both in the center and in the localities, passed a resolution: We enthusiastically welcome the Petrograd garrison and workers, as fighters for the true interests of the great Russian working people in the person of the workers and peasants, and we consider their victory a huge step towards the conquest of the freedoms proclaimed by the Russian Revolution.

The moment has come when the Russian people must say: "I am the master of the country. I want to build my own destiny." We, representatives of the division, declare on behalf of our regiments: we support power For advice to all that they demand of us, we shout for all those who rise against the Soviets: hands off, do not dare to encroach on the will of the people, to the Central Committee of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers
And Peasant deputies should include representatives of all corps of the active Army ...

In order to save the country from complete ruin and the Revolution from destruction, we demand urgent measures: 1) The Constituent

Assembly must be convened at the appointed time, not for a single day. For successful preparation for the elections, we demand complete freedom of the press and oral agitation. 2) We demand an explanation

all treaties concluded by previous governments, and active speech before all

belligerent and neutral countries with a proposal for the immediate conclusion of a just and democratic peace. 3) We demand the immediate

transfer without redemption of all land to all the working people, and both the land and the living and dead implements will be transferred to the jurisdiction of the peasant land committees. Forests are transferred to the jurisdiction of logging committees, which must supply the population

with fuel in the required norm. Unnecessary damage to forests must be strictly punished by law, and the final distribution must take place in the

Constituent Assembly. 4) All generals, officers, officials and clerics to give a pension of no more than 500 rubles a year. 5) Careful control over the

factory industry, satisfaction of the population with bread and basic necessities of the factory industry at strictly fixed prices. 6) In order to avoid the final disintegration of the Army, we demand an immediate regulation of transport, supplying the army with food, footwear, uniforms,

replenishment, fodder, technical equipment. 7) We demand the immediate abolition of the death penalty for all, no matter in what cases

this happens. 8) Officers who reveal hostility to the new system, according to the responses of the relevant organizations, should be demoted and sent to the trenches. 9) We demand that all units sent against the Soviets be immediately returned to the front.

Chairman of the Divisional Meeting Junior non-commissioned officer Lebedev Secretary Junior non-commissioned officer Kolodkin.

The Bolsheviks began to put into practice their promises to end the war. On November 11, 1917, at 6 o'clock in the morning, L. D. Trotsky sent out a telegram:

"Regimental, divisional, corps and army committees, Soviets of workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies. Everyone, everyone, everyone!"

Former Supreme Commander-in-Chief Dukhonin sends a note to the army from representatives of the allied powers at Headquarters. The heads of all allied military missions, except for the American one, protest in their note against any violation of the terms of the agreement

concluded by the tsarist government with the allies on August 23, 1914. Representatives of the allied governments protest against a separate truce between

Russia and Germany, but at the same time do not give any

response to

the proposal made by him by the Council of People's Commissars for a truce on all fronts. In conclusion, the Allied representatives threaten that any violation of the treaty by Russia

entail the most severe consequences.

Regarding this telegram from General Dukhonin, I consider it necessary to make the following statement in the face of the army and the country:

Appeal of allied representatives with a diplomatic note to a retired general

behind

disobedience to the order of the Government would mean, on the formal side, unacceptable interference in the internal life of the country with the aim

of causing a civil war. In essence, a diplomatic note, if it is not fictional, but real, would mean an attempt

allied

representatives through threats to force the Russian army and the Russian people to continue the war further in fulfillment of the agreements

concluded by the tsar and

confirmed by the governments of Milyukov-Kerensky-Tereshchenko.

The Council of People's Commissars, from the first day of its existence, openly declared that it did not consider

the Russian people bound by old treaties concluded behind the backs of the people to please the bourgeois classes of Russia and the allied countries.

An attempt to influence the revolutionary will of Soviet power with the dead letter of secret treaties is doomed to failure in advance. Comrades!

Please

pay attention to when the contract was concluded and by whom, and you will see

what failure

treaties we are threatened by our allies. Sweeping aside the threats contained in the note, which cannot divert us from the path of struggle for an honest

democratic world, we declare that the republican government, in the person of the Council of People's Commissars, proposes not a separate, but a general truce, and in

this proposal it feels itself to be the spokesman of genuine interests and aspirations of the popular masses not only in Russia, but in general in all the warring countries.

Soldiers! Workers! Peasants! Your Soviet government will not allow you to

the foreign bourgeoisie was again driven to the slaughter. Don't be afraid of threats! The suffering peoples of Europe are with us. They all want immediate peace. Our

offer of a truce sounds like a message of salvation to them. The peoples of Europe will not allow the imperialist governments to attack the Russian people, who are guilty

of wanting peace and brotherhood of peoples. And let everyone know that the soldiers, workers and peasants of Russia did not overthrow the tsar and the

government of Kerensky for this,

to
remain cannon fodder for the allied imperialists.

Soldiers, continue your fight for an immediate truce! Choose your delegates for negotiations. Your Commander-in-Chief, Ensign Krylenko, is leaving for the front today to take the fight for a truce into his own hands.

Down with the old secret treaties and diplomatic intrigues! Long live the honest, open struggle for world peace!" The text of the note of the allied missions referred to in the telegram was as follows:

"Chiefs of missions accredited to the Supreme Russian Command, acting on

on the basis of precise instructions received from their governments through plenipotentiaries in Petrograd, have the honor to declare the most energetic protest before the Russian High Command against any violations of the terms of the agreement of August 23 (September 5), 1914, by the powers of the Concord, to which the allies, including Russia, solemnly pledged not

conclude
separately from each other, no truce, no suspension of hostilities. The undersigned heads of military missions also consider it their duty to bring to the attention of Your Excellency that any violation of the treaty by Russia will entail the most

severe consequences".

In response to Trotsky's appeal, the regimental committee of the 5th Kargopol Dragoon Regiment adopted its appeal to the soldiers:

"Comrades! From the radiotelegram it is clear that our dear allies are threatening us with something and threatening with grave consequences. Why are they threatening us? For the fact that we are striving for peace, that we wish peace to all the suffering people from that terrible massacre. Comrades, no matter how terrible the threat is, we should not lose heart, for we have nothing more to fear, what can be more terrible than the threat that is approaching us? The threat is approaching us - hunger.

But the most characteristic thing in this threat is that the mask of goodwill towards us allied, and with them and their imperialists are falling, comrades, we must now understand what their love for

to the Russian people: in the blood of the suffering people for the sake of their captivating designs.

Allies are good when their ally, walking along a thorny and bloody path, is exhausted, bleeding, cold and dying of hunger, with mortal sorrow, longing for life, with

pleading:

"Comrades, I am dying and no longer able to endure these sufferings, let's put up with our rival!" What do we see?
We see that these
imaginary allies and friends of the people raise knives over this suffering people and want to put an end to this sufferer
with a stab in
the back.

Comrades, judge for yourself who are our friends and who are our enemies. Our friends are the working people of all
countries,
and at the last minute we must extend our fraternal hand to these friends and shout: "Comrades, save us, we are perishing,
our enemies
are the capitalists and imperialists of all countries!"

Chairman of the regimental committee senior non-commissioned officer Ivankin.

For Secretary M. Chikaridze"".

N. N. Dukhonin was removed from his post and on November 20 was arrested by the new Commander-in-Chief Ensign N.
V. Krylenko, who arrived at Headquarters. On the platform of the Mogilev railway station, Dukhonin was brutally killed by
soldiers
and sailors, outraged that he had released Krylenko before his arrival.

from

prison leaders of the Kornilov rebellion. This massacre provoked a new wave of lynching of the officers who still remained
in their regiments. She also reached the 5th Kargopol Dragoon Regiment. Lieutenant Yasinsky, who served in the same
squadron as
Konstantin Rokossovsky, became a victim of lynching. The latter, undoubtedly, was present at this massacre, recorded
in a special
protocol.

Here is this eloquent document: "Long live the
Revolution! Decree

General meeting of the dragoons of the 4th squadron of the 5th Kargopol Dragoon Regiment on December 19,
1917, among eighty-five
people (85), consisting of chairman Oleinikov, comrade Ermakov and secretary Dikov.

Order of the day.

1) On the trial of the former lieutenant Yasinsky. 2) Election of the squadron
commander and his deputy.

3) About Lieutenant Yasinsky's own belongings.

4) About the things of comrade who did not return from vacation. Gazaliev.
Decided unanimously:

1) By this resolution, we establish and confirm our decision taken on December 18 (corrected from 17. - B. S.) of the year on the trial of the former lieutenant Yasinsky as a cardinal measure to stop his counter-revolutionary activities, the squadron recognizes as correct the deprivation of his life, which was cited in fulfillment of the above number.

2) Comrade was chosen as the squadron commander. Stafeev.

3) By a majority of votes he was elected as his deputy comrade. Chestnuts.

4) Sell the belongings of the deceased lieutenant Yasinsky and the money received from the sale together

with his own money in the amount of eight hundred rubles (800 rubles 97 k.)
together with

by this resolution to the regimental committee to send them to the Military Revolutionary Committee to help the families of those who died for freedom during the Revolution.

From further minutes of the committee, we learn that Lieutenant Yasinsky's saddle was sold by Klyuchnikov for 60 rubles, and "the issue of the loss of Lieutenant Yasinsky's 6. cigarette case was not raised." Obviously, the cigarette case was quietly pocketed by one of the dragoons.

Rokossovsky, like other squadron dragoons, approved the murder of Lieutenant Yasinsky. And, apparently, he did not feel any pity for the murdered. But the lieutenant in his dying confession was sincere: military affairs were the meaning of his life, he could not do anything else and did not want to, and the Bolsheviks, having concluded a truce with the Germans, deprived him of his life goal, so he did not want and did not

could serve them. Instead of letting the unfortunate man go home, as they had done before with almost all the officers of the regiment, including the squadron commander of the 4th squadron, staff captain Gazaliev, this time the dragoons preferred to kill the lieutenant. Undoubtedly, this decision was influenced by the civil war already flaring up in the Don and Ukraine and the fear that Yasinsky would join the ranks of the anti-Bolshevik forces. Without showing mercy to a fellow officer, in whose veins Polish blood also flowed, Rokossovsky was forced to act according to the iron logic of the outbreak of the Civil War, in which all officers were considered

How
"class enemies" of all soldiers.

In essence, the whole difference between Yasinsky and Rokossovsky was that the first graduated cavalry school, and the second, in addition to the military profession received at the front, even before the war

managed to master the craft of a stonemason and subsequently joked more than once that in the event of dismissal from the army he would not disappear: he would make tombstones and fences.

On March 21, 1918, by order of the 5th Dragoon Cargo-Polish Regiment, "the below-named soldiers who are on business trips and have not yet returned to the regiment

exclude

from the lists of the regiment. This list included Franz Rokossovsky, who was at the headquarters of the 5th cavalry division of the dragoons of the 3rd

squadron. By the same order, "the following dragoons and horses transferred to the Vologda Military Department and enlisted in the Red Army

exclude

from the lists of the regiment and from allowances, and horses only from forage allowances from March 18 this year. G.". In this list of thirty-four people was the

dragoon of the 4th squadron Konstantin Rokossovsky with the horse Zhemchuzhny. Consequently, until about March 18, 1918, he still remained in his

regiment.

In April 1918, the 5th Cavalry Division was disbanded in Cherepovets. Shortly before this, as we see, Rokossovsky, with many of his comrades in the regiment, went to a new war - the Civil War.

Chapter Three CIVIL: BROTHER TO BROTHER

It must be emphasized that the combat path of Konstantin Rokossovsky during the Civil War is still very poorly documented. Only a small number of documents

signed by him or directly related to his combat activities have been published. The lack of documents is more than made up for by fictionalized stories about his exploits, but in most cases it is not possible to determine the degree of their reliability.

possible.

How Rokossovsky's career developed at that time and in what hostilities he participated can be reliably judged primarily by his track record. April 22, 1920

V

candidate card, his first service record in the Red Army, about the last military rank received by that time, Rokossovsky said: "In the Red Army - the commander

of a separate cavalry. squadron from May 1, 1919 to January 23, 1920. Service in the Red

he described the army as follows: "As an ordinary cavalryman of the Kargopol cavalry detachment from December 15, 1917. to October 1, 1918, assistant chief

Kargopolsky kav.

detachment, squadron commander in the 15th Ural Cavalry Regiment from October 1, 1918 to 4

December 1918, commander of the 19th separate cavalry. division from December 4 to December 30, 1918, squadron

commander in the Consolidated Ural Volodarsky Cavalry Regiment from December 30, 1918 to | April 1919, pom. commander of

the Consolidated Ural Volodarsky Regiment from April 1, 1919 to May 1, 1919, commander of the 2nd Ural separate division

named after Volodarsky | May 1919 to January 23, 1920 He served continuously. Regarding participation in hostilities, he indicated:

"He participated against the Haidamaks on the South-Western Front, from June 1918. against the Czechoslovaks and

Kolchak's army on the Eastern Front.

Here Rokossovsky mentioned that he was wounded on November 7, 1919. He also reported

That is

a member of the RCP (b) since March 7, 1919 with party card No. 5239. Rokossovsky assessed his state of health,

despite the injury, as satisfactory. Of the elected positions, he named only the position of assistant chief of the Kargopol

cavalry detachment from December 15, 1917 to March 1, 1918. To the question "what positions can a candidate be

enrolled in," Konstantin Konstantinovich answered: "I am satisfied with the present one." The adopted decision turned out to

be quite expected: "To certify as a regimental commander of the 30th Cavalry on February 12 this year. order for 30 pages of the division No. 5883.

At that moment, Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovsky (that's how he first called himself in the indicated card) did not

yet know that his participation in the Civil War was far from over and he still had many trials to go.

In his last service record, compiled in the 1960s, the passage of service in the Civil War looked like this:

"December 1917 - August 1918

Assistant chief of the Krasnogvardeisky Kargopol cavalry detachment. Military Council of the Bryansk region, 3rd Army, Eastern Front.

August 1918 - May 1919

Squadron commander of the 1st Ural Volodarsky Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Army, Eastern Front.

May 1919 - January 1920

Commander of the 2nd Separate Ural Cavalry Division of the 30th Infantry Division of the 3rd Army. Eastern front.

January 1920 - August 1920

Commander of the 30th Separate Cavalry Regiment of the 30th Infantry Division of the 5th Army, Eastern Front. August 1920 - October 1921

Commander of the 35th Separate Cavalry Regiment of the 35th Infantry Division of the 5th Army, Eastern Front.

It is curious that in his autobiography of 1940, Rokossovsky called the time of his entry into the Red Guard not December 15, 1917, but October of the same year. He wrote: "In October 1917, he voluntarily joined the Red Guard in the Cargo-Polish Red Guard detachment as an ordinary Red Guard, and in November 1917 he was elected assistant chief of this detachment."

Comparing the data of the service records, we can conclude that the Kargopol cavalry detachment fought against the Gaidamaks of its former division commander Hetman Skoropadsky as part of the troops of the Bryansk region in April-May 1918. From June to August, Rokossovsky fought against the Czechoslovaks on the Volga, and then with the troops of the Ufa directory as part of the 3rd Army of the Eastern

front. In August, the Kargopol detachment joined the 15th Ural named after the Volodarsky cavalry regiment. On October 1, Rokossovsky became a squadron commander there. Since December 1918, they had to fight against the armies of Admiral A.V. Kolchak, who overthrew the directory on November 18, 1918 and proclaimed himself the Supreme Ruler of Russia.

In his autobiography of 1940, Rokossovsky wrote: "In August 1918, the detachment (Kargopolsky. - B.S.) was reorganized into the 1st Ural Volodarsky Cavalry Regiment, in which I received appointment

commander of the 1st squadron. In February 1919, the regiment was reorganized into the 2nd Ural Separate Cavalry Division of the 30th Infantry Division - was appointed commander of this division. On January 8, 1920, the division turned into the 30th Cavalry Regiment of the 30th Infantry Division, I appointed commander of this regiment. In August 1920, from the post of commander of the 30th cavalry regiment

transferred to
the post of commander of the 35th cavalry regiment of the 35th rifle division.

In the same autobiography of 1940, Rokossovsky described his participation in the military operations of the Civil War as follows: "He took part in the battles: as part of the Kargopol Red Guard cavalry detachment as a memorial detachment - in the suppression of counter-revolutionary uprisings in the region of Vologda, Bui, Galich and Soligalich from November 1917. to February 1918. In battles with the Gaidamaks, Remnev's anarchist bandits and in the suppression of anarchist counter-revolutionary uprisings in the area of Kharkov, Unecha, Mikhailovsky Farm, Karachev

—
Bryansk from February 1918 to July 1918. Since July 1918, as part of the same detachment, he was transferred to the Eastern Front near Sverdlovsk and participated in battles with the White Guards and Czechoslovaks under Art. Kuzino, Sverdlovsk, Art. Shamara and Shalya until August 1918.

Since August 1918, the detachment was reorganized into the 1st Ural Volodarsky Cavalry Regiment.

—
appointed commander of the 1st squadron. From August 1918, he held consecutive command posts: squadron

commander, 1st Ural named after. Volodarsky cavalry regiment, commander of the 2nd Ural separate cavalry division, commander of the 30th cavalry regiment, being on

Eastern Front (3rd and 5th Armies), participated in the battles until the complete defeat of the Kolchak White Army and the

liquidation of it. In 1921, he took part in the battles against the White Guard detachments of Baron Ungern until their complete liquidation, being the commander of the 35th Cavalry Regiment.

There is some inaccuracy here. As we remember, Rokossovsky, together with his comrades in the Red Guard detachment, left the location of the 5th Kargopol Dragoon Regiment in Cherepovets only on March 18, 1918, so he could not fight with the Haidamaks in February of that year.

It is worth paying attention to the fact that Rokossovsky spent the entire war, except for a short period of struggle with the Haidamaks, on the Eastern Front. Here the quality of the personnel of the White armies was much lower than in the West. The bulk of the officers returning from the fronts of the First World War settled in the ranks of the Volunteer Army and other white formations in the west of the country. In the east, until 1917, far from the most worthy representatives of the Russian officer corps often served, as a rule, they ended up in Asiatic Russia for some official misconduct. Unlike the western regions on the Eastern Front, neither the Whites nor the Reds had large cavalry formations: divisions, corps and

armies.

Therefore, here the cavalry division and regiment commanded by Rokossovsky were a significant force capable of performing independent tasks.

Rokossovsky was appointed commander of the 30th separate cavalry regiment of the 30th rifle division on January 23,

1920. A career could be considered quite successful, especially since Konstantin Konstantinovich managed to earn two Orders of the Red Banner.

Rokossovsky's friend and biographer, General of the Army Pavel Ivanovich Batov, described his military path in the Civil War as follows:

Kargopol Red Guard Cavalry Detachment. The twenty year old boy was
their

among the Red Guards - the son of a worker and a worker himself, from the age of fourteen he earned his own bread, a soldier who fought at the front throughout the First World War. Konstantin Konstantinovich with

he recalled with gratitude the head of the Bolshevik detachment, Adolf Kazimirovich Yushkevich. In the nineteenth year, K.K. Rokossovsky himself became a Bolshevik.

The stories of colleagues, archival documents help us to imagine Konstantin Rokossovsky as a young red commander. He was tall, lean, physically strong and fit. Eyes shone with intelligence, enthusiasm and courage. He was stingy with words and generous with friendship. Simple, modest and desperately bold.

In the Ishim region, a separate cavalry division under his command suddenly attacked the village

Vikolinsky, occupied by large forces of the White Guards. There was a panic in the camp of the enemy. However, the slightest delay in the attack - and the enemy will come to his senses, realize that the forces of the attackers are small.

There, on the outskirts, an enemy artillery battery is already deploying for battle. The decision was ripe instantly.

Rokossovsky takes twenty horsemen and, with swords drawn, to the battery. She

opens fire. Buckshot whistles. But the red cavalry break through to the guns. Rokossovsky jumps off his horse near a

white non-commissioned officer who raised his hands and in a voice in which a threat and an order sounds, he says:

- See - the Cossacks? Fire on them! If you shoot, you will live. And the guns turned and opened rapid fire on the Cossacks. For this fight, Rokossovsky received his first Order of the Red Banner.

In Rokossovsky's presentation to this order, a description of his feat was given: "November 4, 1919 in the battle near the village of

Vikolinsky ... comrade. Rokossovsky, acting in the vanguard of the 262nd Infantry Regiment and directly controlling the division

entrusted to him, broke through the location

numerically

superior enemy. In a cavalry formation with 30 horsemen, he attacked the enemy's battery and, having overcome the

stubborn resistance of the infantry cover, with a dashing blow took the battery into

captured in

full serviceability ... "Followed by a brief conclusion:" To petition the high command for the presentation of comrade.

Rokossovsky to the Order of the Red Banner.

V. I. Kardashov in his biography of Rokossovsky described the battle near Omsk on November 7, 1919 as follows:

"... Ivan Gryaznov's brigade followed the retreating enemy on the heels. They marked the eve of the second anniversary of the Great

October Revolution by liberating the Mangut station, 85 versts east of Ishim. From the prisoners captured at the station by

the 262nd regiment, the brigade commander learned that not far from Mangut, in the village of Karaulnaya, Kolchak headquarters

was located, apparently not suggesting that the Reds were so close. It was decided to send Rokossovsky's cavalry to the rear of the

enemy, who were less tired during the transition to Mangut.

Having received the task, Rokossovsky immediately spoke with the main forces of the division. The division spent the night of

November 7 on the road. They went through the enemy formations successfully, and primarily because there were good guides -

captured Kolchak soldiers. By dawn, the division quietly and imperceptibly approached the Guard. Silence reigned over the village.

Rokossovsky decided to once again use the prisoners who retained their shoulder straps: having put them on, the former Kolchak

men went to the village and soon returned, leading the enemy sentries who had been removed. They confirmed that the headquarters

of the Kolchak division and the Red attack were indeed located in Karaulnaya.

none

expects. After that, the village could be attacked fearlessly. Having deployed squadrons, Rokossovsky threw them into

battle.

Silently, the horsemen broke into the village, and after a few minutes it was in their hands. The red cavalry met no resistance: no one

had time to take up arms, and the Kolchak soldiers did not want to fight. The collision occurred in only one place.

Rokossovsky with a group of riders raced along the street. Suddenly from the gates of the big stone two wagons jumped out of the house, crammed full of officers: there were about fifteen of them.

- Give up! the division commander shouted at the top of his voice, but shots rang out in response. Surrounded on all sides by cavalrymen, the officers did not raise their hands, did not throw down their weapons. They, shooting, jumped off the wagons, trying to somehow organize the defense. Rokossovsky, accompanied by his comrades, without hesitation, spurred his horse and drove it straight at the enemies.

The first on his way was a tall, slender officer in an open sheepskin coat. Without aiming, he fired at Rokossovsky with a revolver and missed. He did not have time to make the second shot, having received a fatal blow with a saber on the head. Another moment - and Rokossovsky's horse reared over another Kolchak. The only thing that the division commander managed to notice was a hat pulled over his forehead, a brush of a mustache over a bared mouth and the muzzle of a revolver aimed at him, Rokossovsky. A moment, and, bending over the horse, the division commander strikes a terrible blow. At the same second, a shot sounds and Rokossovsky feels a strong push on his shoulder. The horse carries him forward, at last he stops it and turns around.

It's all over, only three Kolchak officers, who dropped their weapons in time, survived. From neighboring yards, cavalrymen drive out the guards of the division headquarters, who did not get out of their houses during the fight. Near the killed enemies, several cavalrymen are examining the officer who had just been hacked to death by Rokossovsky.

- How are you ... - says one of them, Nikolai Shablinsky, referring to the slowly approaching Rokossovsky. - What's wrong with you?

- Nothing, I think, terrible, he wounded me here, - holding his shoulder with his other hand, he answers and, turning to the prisoners, asks: - Who is this?

"General Voskresensky, head of our division," the surviving Kolchak officer mutters through clenched teeth.

Rokossovsky himself writes about this in his memoirs: "During the attack, in single combat with the commander of the Omsk group, General Voskresensky, I received a bullet from him in the shoulder, and he is from me - a mortal blow with a saber.

But this episode has nothing to do with reality. Kolchak did not have chief

division (or commander of the Omsk group) by the name of Voskresensky, and not a single general with such a surname died on November 7, 1919, or on days close to this date. There was only one Major General Vladimir Voskresensky. However, he could not have died on November 7, 1919, since on November 11 of the same year he was appointed commander of the artillery of the Chitinsky

military

district, thousands of kilometers from Omsk, and in May - July 1920 he was treated in

Harbin. True, according to some reports, in 1945, General Voskresensky was captured by Soviet troops in Harbin, and in 1946 he was either shot or died in the camp.

There is a version that Rokossovsky, and after him Kardashov, simply confused the name of the general. As if we are talking about Major General Voznesensky, head of the 15th Omsk Siberian Rifle Division. However, there was no general with such a surname in the Kolchak army either. There was a colonel

Nikolai Saveryanovich Voznesensky, who ended World War I as a lieutenant colonel, V

In 1918, he commanded the 1st Steppe Regiment in Omsk, and in May 1919 he led the 15th Omsk Siberian Rifle Division. According to the radio report of the Soviet agency

ROSTA dated November 9, 1919, he was hacked to death in battle on November 7 in a battle south of Mangut station. According to the newspaper "Krasny Ural" dated November 14, 1919 and radio reports from ROSTA from 7

November, 12 kilometers northeast of the Mangut station, the 59th Sayan regiment of the 15th Siberian division was captured, along with the division headquarters,

and the head of the division, who refused to surrender, was shot on the spot. Note that the village of Karaulnaya (hereinafter

village

Karaulnoe), where Rokossovsky was wounded, is located not to the south, but to the northeast of the Mangut station, so he, in principle, could have killed Colonel Voznesensky on November 7.

By the way, until February 22, 1920, the head of the 15th division was Major General Innokenty Semenovitch Smolin, who died peacefully in Tahiti in 1973. However, since May

In 1919, Smolin simultaneously commanded the 3rd Steppe Siberian Army Corps, Colonel Voznesensky could be his deputy in the 15th division.

It cannot be ruled out that this entire heroic episode was added to the marshal's memoirs after his death by one of the editors.

The certificate of injury, issued on December 15, 1919 to the commander of the 2nd Ural Cavalry Division Konstantin Rokossovsky by doctor Yurkov on December 15, 1919, indicated that he was wounded in the village of Karaulnaya, Ishim district, Tobolsk province, with a revolver bullet in the shoulder of his right hand. The wound was blind, as a result, the mobility of the upper

parts

clavicle. They did not remove the bullet, limiting themselves to bandaging. This bullet is still

in body

Rokossovsky in memory of the fratricidal Civil War.

By the way, since Rokossovsky was wounded in the right shoulder, as a result of which the mobility of the arm was limited, he could not hack Colonel Voznesensky with a blow from his saber. After all, Konstantin Konstantinovich was not left-handed. He could still shoot the colonel, drawing a revolver with his left hand, but he couldn't cut him down. So, at least, the description of the specific circumstances of Voznesensky's death clearly came from the pen of an unknown editor, who was guided by the clichés of the heroic romance of Soviet literature about the Civil War, and not by Rokossovsky himself.

In the middle of 1920, the first difficulties arose in Rokossovsky's career. In the attestation drawn up for him on the basis of the results of divisional exercises by the commissar of the 30th division, Romanov, it was noted: "He treats the common cause of organizing the Red Army as a communist. The character is soft. Energetic at work. He enjoys great prestige among the Red Army soldiers, command staff and party organizations. A brave militant, showing an example of courage in the offensive ... Does not quite correspond to his position. There is no ability to properly distribute the forces of the regiment ... The position leaves much to be desired. Perhaps this characterization was influenced by the state of emergency in the Rokossovsky regiment. In the 4th squadron, a conspiracy was formed from the Cossacks who served with the Whites. It was also attended by two Poles who had previously served in the Polish Legion in Siberia. 60 people deserted and crossed the Mongolian border. It is also possible that Rokossovsky had some kind of conflict with the commissars of the regiment and division.

On August 8, 1920, an order was signed to move Rokossovsky to the post of commander of a cavalry regiment in the 35th Infantry Division, which was also part of the 5th Army. At first

September 1920, an order came to transfer the division to the Western Front. Rokossovsky asked to be left in the division. He wanted to take part in the big war. On September 2, 1920, the commander of the 30th I.K. Gryaznov sent a telegram to the headquarters of the 5th Army: "The commander of the 30th

cavalry comrade.

Rokossovsky, according to the order to the troops of the army No. 1254, should be sent to the disposal of the division chief 35 to take up the post of the commander of the 35th cavalry, in connection with the new

As an old volunteer, a communist of Polish nationality, he petitions for the appointment of a division to leave him in the

division and send him with the division to the Western Front. Confirming the petition of comrade. Rokossovsky, I ask you to

leave him in the cavalry regiment, regardless of the assignment to the post of regiment commander comrade.

Troitsky". There is a pencil resolution on the telegram

chief

army headquarters: "Inform the head of the 30th rifle division that the order for the army No. 1254 remains unchanged."

From this report it followed that Konstantin Konstantinovich, without any doubt, was ready to fight against his compatriots.

For him they were "White Poles". There is no evidence that he experienced any reflection about the fact that he would have to

fight against his compatriots. However, the incident in the 4th squadron with the participation of the Poles could cause the command to be wary of Rokossovsky. Moreover, after the defeat near Warsaw, the Soviet troops hopelessly retreated and plans to form the Polish Red Army were abandoned. This army, numbering only about a thousand

people, never entered the battle and was disbanded shortly after the retreat from Warsaw. Yes, and served there for the

most part not ethnic Poles, but Belarusians and Jews. So the need for "Communists of Polish nationality" for the Sovietization

of Poland in early September was no longer relevant. Incidentally,

The 30th division never managed to fight against the Poles. When it arrived in European Russia at the end of September, peace talks were already underway with Poland, and the division was sent to Wrangel

front.

But Konstantin Konstantinovich still had to fight. In May, the Asian cavalry division of Baron R.F. Ungern-Sternberg invaded

the Soviet Transbaikalia from Mongolia, which tried to capture Troitskosavsk. On June 2, 1921, on the outskirts of the city,

in a battle with a brigade of the Asian Division under the command of General B.P. Rezhukhin, near the village of

Zhelturinskaya, in Transbaikalia, Rokossovsky saved an infantry battalion from destruction by a counterattack,

was seriously wounded in the leg, but remained in service until end of the fight. For this he was awarded the second

Order of the Red Banner.

Konstantin Konstantinovich recalled: "In June 1921, the Red Army finished off Baron Ungern on the border with Mongolia. At the village of Zhelturinskaya, the 35th cavalry regiment, which I commanded, attacked the Ungern cavalry that had broken through our infantry. In this battle, I was wounded a second time, in the leg with a broken bone. The wound was a bullet wound.

V. I. Kardashov wrote: "The wound turned out to be very serious. The bullet broke the bone. On the same day, having handed over the division to his deputy, Ivan Konstantinovich Pavlov, Rokossovsky is serving

hospital. This hospital was located in the same Mysovsk. Here he stayed June and July

1921...

Rokossovsky, having learned that the city was threatened with an attack by Ungern, did not wait for an order, let alone an

evacuation, to which he had every right. At his request, nurses bandage the still unrecovered leg to two sticks, Rokossovsky takes crutches and sits in a cart. In the shortest possible time, Rokossovsky forms a consolidated detachment from the rear and convalescent Red Army soldiers of the 35th Infantry Division and the 5th Kuban Cavalry Brigade - about 200

equestrian and

500 foot soldiers. The detachment is well armed, even two guns are at its disposal. Some of the fighters manage to be put

on carts, and with this rather mobile detachment Rokossovsky marches across the Khamar-Daban ridge, the same Khamar-

Daban, towards the enemy.

The fighters in the detachment crept up combat-ready, their commander was experienced, so it is not surprising that Ungern,

after a small clash with the Rokossovsky detachment, did not advance on Mysovsk, but turned to the northeast, towards Novo-

Selenginsk and Verkhneudinsk (now the city of Ulan- Ude). There was a threat of the capture of Verkhneudinsk, since

the command of the 5th Army did not have free forces at its disposal. Now Rokossovsky receives an urgent order, covering

part of the forces on the road to Mysovsk from the south along the Udunga valley, to immerse himself in the echelon

at the Mysovsk station and arrive in Verkhneudinsk, where to unload and secure the city from the south from the possible

penetration of Ungern units there.

Konstantin Rokossovsky fulfilled this order as well. Returning to Mysovsk, he loaded his detachment into the train and went to

Verkhneudinsk. Without a moment's hesitation, from Verkhneudinsk he sets out in marching order towards the enemy in

Tarbagatai. And all this on crutches. You involuntarily come to admiration from the determination, energy and dedication of

this extraordinary

man!"

There really is something to be surprised about, especially when you consider that no one was going to send the seriously wounded Rokossovsky to Mysovsk (now Babushkin), located hundreds of kilometers from the battlefield, when the larger city of Troitskosavsk with a good hospital.

Rokossovsky remained there all the time, while the epic of Ungern was coming to its inglorious end. It is not necessary to attribute to Konstantin Konstantinovich some fabulous feats - he has quite enough real ones.

Wounded in battle near Zhelturinskaya, the Civil War actually ended for Rokossovsky.

But, as a member of the party, a young promising commander of suitable proletarian origin, and even with two Orders of the Red Banner, he was kept in the army, despite large-scale reductions. He had to stay for another decade in the East of Russia.

Chapter Four

BETWEEN TWO WARS

In October 1921, shortly after being discharged from the hospital in Troitskosavsk (now Kyakhta), Rokossovsky received another promotion. He now had to command a cavalry brigade, though only for one year. In his autobiography of 1940, he wrote: "In October 1921 he was transferred as commander of the 3rd brigade of the 5th Kuban cavalry division. In October 1922 in connection with

reorganization of the 5th division into a separate 5th Kuban cavalry brigade, at his own request, he was appointed commander of the 27th cavalry regiment of the same brigade. In the certification of 1921, it was said about Rokossovsky: "He successively held the positions of commander of the cavalry division and cavalry regiment. Throughout his service, he showed himself from the best side. The regiment was well trained in every way. The cavalry of the regiment, despite the difficult conditions experienced in the Mongolian operation, is at the right height. Personal courage, the ability to lead in battle, the rich initiative of Comrade Rokossovsky was marked by a double award of the Order of the Red Banner. It can be quite successful to train Red Army soldiers and command staff, both under military and peacetime conditions. Certified for the position of brigade commander.

The 27th cavalry regiment was stationed in Transbaikalia. In the summer of 1922, in Troitskosavsk, an old merchant town on the very Mongolian border, Rokossovsky met a local

a native - a beautiful young female gymnasium teacher Yulia Petrovna Barmina, who came from a family of merchants and also worked as a city librarian. Julia's father at first

was against her marriage to the red commander, but then gave up. April 30, 1923 they

Married Constantine. Julia was then twenty-three years old. In 1925 their only daughter, Ariadne (Ada), was born.

Here is the certification of the commander of the 27th cavalry regiment of the 5th separate Kuban cavalry brigade Rokossovsky, given at the end of 1923:

"Has a strong will, energetic, resolute. Possesses dashing, composure. Aged. Capable of showing useful initiative. Understands the environment well. Quick-witted. In relation to subordinates, as well as to himself, he is

demanding. Caring. Enjoys love and popularity. He loves the military. The state of health is satisfactory, but requires

constant support due to a number of injuries. Camp life is easy to bear. Possesses extraordinary mental abilities, with love

refers to

pays less attention to his work, paying more attention to the work of combat, organizational and administrative work. Member of

the RCP. Education has five grades of gymnasium. He does not have a special military education, but, loving military affairs,

he is working on himself in the field of self-training. He has extensive practical experience and combat experience in the Red Army, as well as combat experience in the imperialist war. The experience gained is usefully applied in a peaceful

environment, trying to substantiate it theoretically as well. He was awarded two Orders of the Red Banner for operations on

the Eastern Front against Kolchak and Ungern. Carried out tasks of an organizational nature carefully. Due to the lack of special

military

education, it is desirable to send for courses. In the position of the regimental commander is quite consistent.

Kombrig 5th Cavalry. Pisarev. Military brigade commissar Khrustalev.

At the certification, the commander of the 5th Army, I.P. brigades out of turn.

The later certification was just as brilliant: "Energetic, enterprising and decisive commander. Disciplined. Demanding of

himself and subordinates. Well versed in operational environments. He has extensive experience of imperialist and civil war. Works with love. Enjoys great prestige. Possesses extraordinary mental

abilities. Certified for the position of commander of the cavalry. brigades."

Rokossovsky still claimed to have completed five classes at the gymnasium; this helped him to hold on to the post of regimental commander. It is

characteristic that already in this, one of the first attestations of Konstantin Konstantinovich in the Red Army, his outstanding mental abilities were noted. There is

no doubt that Rokossovsky, with his love for military affairs, through independent work, relatively easily made up for the shortcomings of his formal

education, which, most likely, did not exceed three classes of a city school. Without a doubt, the future marshal was a born commander, and even all the shortcomings

of the Red Army, which became obvious in the 1930s and during the Great Patriotic War, did not

could

to prevent his military talent from manifesting itself.

In 1923-1924, Rokossovsky had to fight against the remnants of the ataman's detachments

G. M. Semenov, who dug in in Transbaikalia or came from behind the Chinese border. At that time, his 27th cavalry regiment was recognized as the best in the

Siberian military district. In September 1924, he was sent to Leningrad to the Higher Cavalry School, which was soon transformed into the Cavalry Advanced

Training Courses for commanders. At the same time, the training time was reduced from the originally planned two years to one year. In the same place, at the

courses, in 1925, Rokossovsky also graduated from the circle of Marxist-Leninist training, which should have indicated ideological reliability. Here he succeeded not only in

classes with

plans and maps, but also in equestrian competitions, and in his free time he was fond of fencing with sabers and espadrons. Often they met in a duel

with the future Marshal Georgy Zhukov, and more often Rokossovsky took the upper hand.

According to the recollections of his comrades who studied with him, it was then that Konstantin Konstantinovich became interested in the works of the

outstanding German military theorist of the twentieth century, Karl Clausewitz. Marshal I. Kh. Bagramyan, who met Rokossovsky at a course in Leningrad,

testified: "The elegant and extremely correct

Konstantin

Konstantinovich Rokossovsky. A slender posture, a beautiful appearance, a noble, responsive character and excellent athletic hardening, without which a

cavalryman is not a cavalryman - all this

attracted the hearts of his comrades to him. Among us, avid cavalrymen, he deservedly was considered

the most experienced cavalryman and a fine connoisseur of cavalry tactics. In another version of his memoirs, Ivan Khristoforovich added additional touches to the portrait of Rokossovsky:

"Konstantin Konstantinovich stood out for his almost two-meter height. Moreover, he struck with grace and elegance, as he was unusually slender and truly classically complex.

He carried himself freely, but, perhaps, a little shyly, and a kind smile, illuminating his handsome face, attracted to him. This appearance harmonized perfectly with the whole spiritual structure of Konstantin Konstantinovich, which I soon became convinced of, having become friends with him for life.

According to Rokossovsky, at the Leningrad courses he also struck up a friendship with Zhukov: "We have been friends with G.K. Zhukov for many years. Fate brought us together more than once and again for a long time separated. We first met back in 1924 at the Higher Cavalry School in Leningrad. We arrived there as commanders of cavalry regiments: I am from Transbaikalia, he is from Ukraine. Learned with passion. Naturally, a friendly team of communist commanders, full of energy and youth, was formed. Bagramyan, Sinyakov, Eremenko and other comrades were there. Zhukov, like no other, devoted himself to the study of military science. Let's look into his room - everything is crawling on the map spread out on the floor. Even then, the case, duty for him were above all. At the very beginning of the thirties, our paths converged in Minsk, where I happened to command a cavalry division in the corps of S.K. Timoshenko, and G.K. Zhukov was a regiment commander in the same division. On the eve of the war we met in

otherwise

as: army general Zhukov commanded the district, and I, with the rank of major general, commanded the cavalry, and then the mechanized corps. Georgy Konstantinovich grew up quickly. He had everything over the edge - and talent, and energy, and self-confidence.

In early September 1925, having successfully completed the courses, Rokossovsky returned to Transbaikalia and on September 6 took command of his former regiment, which was now renamed the 75th. About this period of his service, the memoirs of General of the Army G.I. Khetagurov have been preserved. In 1926, Khetagurov served in Dauria as a battery commander in the 5th separate Kuban cavalry brigade, commanded by Rokossovsky. He described the meeting with the brigade commander as follows:

"Finally arrived! - I was cordially greeted by the division commander I.P. Camera. "We've had a battery without a commander for three months now, and you're wandering around in the woods somewhere. I looked after you at the exercises in the Sretensk area. I see that you are famously commanding a mountain battery, and let's persuade Rokossovsky to take you to us. Who will refuse the request of our brigade commander? .. Well, let's go, horseman, I'll introduce you to him ...

Five minutes later we were in the office of K.K. Rokossovsky. The tall, slender brigade commander shook my hand warmly, invited me to sit down, began to ask where I came from, where I served, what I have education.

Having heard that I happened to command a platoon in the 28th division named after V. M. Azin, Rokossovsky remarked:

— Famous division. I knew Comrade Azin well. We fought together in the Volga region. Heroic was the chief! - And suddenly he asked: - Do you like horses?

"I love you, comrade brigade commander. And he arrived with his horse.

"Excellent," he approved ... "Well, Ivan Pavlovich," Rokossovsky turned to the Camera, "introduce Comrade Khetagurov to the battery, and let him immediately take command ... "

This time, Konstantin Konstantinovich did not have a chance to command the regiment for long. From July 1926

until July 1928, Rokossovsky served as an instructor in a separate Mongolian cavalry division
v

Ulaanbaatar. Before a business trip to Mongolia, he received another certification. Now that Stalin had to contend with intra-party opposition, and also due to the fact that Rokossovsky was sent abroad, the emphasis in the certification was placed on political reliability: "Politically well developed. A strong, seasoned member of the party. Despite the fact that Com. Rokossovsky was certified for the position of brigade commander for a number of years, but due to unfavorable circumstances, he remained in the position of regiment commander. He has a wide tactical outlook and successfully leads the cavalry brigade. Being extremely humble

And

devoid of any careerist goals, he unconditionally puts up with his position. However, given his military merits, great command experience, excellent knowledge of the matter, a large tactical outlook and outstanding abilities, consider him worthy of being promoted to the position of commander of a separate cavalry brigade out of turn and to the position of commander of a cavalry division in the next order.

The activities of Rokossovsky in Mongolia were equally highly appreciated. On November 18, 1927, "for the successful completion of special tasks while on a business trip," he was awarded a gold watch with the inscription "From the Revolutionary Military Council of the Siberian Military District." After returning, Rokossovsky received a promotion. He was appointed commander

commissioner of the
5th separate Kuban cavalry brigade stationed in Dauria. But before that, in January 1929, Rokossovsky was sent to Moscow for advanced
training courses for senior officers (KUVNAS). Classes on the courses lasted only two months, and already in
April Rokossovsky
returned to Transbaikalia. At that time, a military conflict with China was brewing, which became inevitable after the
troops of the
Manchu military governor Zhang Zuolin in July

captured

Chinese Eastern Railway, which was jointly owned by China and the USSR, and arrested Soviet employees. On
July 17, a
break in Soviet-Chinese diplomatic relations followed.

G. I. Khetagurov recalled the battles on the CER:

“By the beginning of September 1929, the Special Far Eastern Army completed the deployment
of their strength.

The troops were divided into two operational groups: Primorsky and Transbaikal. The Primorskaya group focused
on the Nikolsko-
Ussuri direction. The Transbaikalskaya was advancing to the Zhalainor-Manchurian direction ... The 5th Separate
Kuban Cavalry
Brigade, included in the Transbaikalian group, concentrated in the village of Abagaytuevsky.

A member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR, the head of the Political Directorate of the Red Army
A.S. Bubnov, came to visit us. Speaking to the commanding staff of the brigade, he drew our attention to the fact that the
Soviet
government did everything to prevent an armed conflict in the Far East, but the Chinese militarists and their allies, the
White
Guards, are getting bolder every day. We felt it ourselves, we saw with our own eyes how they shelled Soviet border
villages,
killed civilians, destroyed livestock, disrupted the harvest.

Terrorized by frequent fire raids, the inhabitants of the village of Olochinskaya wrote a letter to the Chairman of the Central
Executive Committee of the USSR, M. I. Kalinin, demanding protection and retribution. As a measure of retaliation,
an attack was
made on the Chinese fortress of Shivei (Shiveysyan). It was applied to the 73rd

cavalry regiment supported by my battery.

It was late rainy autumn. We had to make an exhausting march through the flooded Argun valley. People and
horses were
exhausted. Damp remote shrapnel tubes; upon arrival at the village of Olochinskaya, we were forced to hastily
change gunpowder
in them.

For the firing positions of the battery, I chose a skyscraper overgrown with kaoliang, a little to the right of the village. True, it was necessary to make considerable efforts to drag the guns there. But the fortress of the enemy was in full view. It was a four-story building topped with an observation tower. Machine-gun embrasures were visible on each of the floors. We also found a bomb battery.

- Is the garrison of the fortress large? I asked the head of our frontier outpost.

- In the recent past, it did not exceed a platoon, but in recent days it has probably increased to a battalion: several cavalry and foot detachments proceeded to the fortress.

Where are their horses?

"Probably in the yard.

With the onset of darkness, gun crews began to roll in guns with their own hands. on height. All night long they brought ammunition on their hands. Before dawn the battery was ready for opening fire. And then the brigade commander appeared.

- Well done! he praised. - Settled well.

From the fortress, obviously, they noticed the movement of our horsemen and fired at Olochinskaya from machine guns.

"Well, Comrade Khetagurov," Rokossovsky turned to me, "it's time for you start off.

The batteries hit the embrasures of the fortress, then the observation tower. We fired incendiary shells, and after the very first volleys, a glow of fire arose over the fortress.

- Warm regards! Batteries joked. And I continued to give commands: - The first and second guns - on bombers, the third and fourth - shrapnel in the yard!

The fortress began to panic. The surviving Chiang Kai-shekists jumped out of it, tried to be saved flight. But two squadrons of the 73rd cavalry regiment were already swimming across the cold and stormy

Argun...

In the destroyed fortress, 77 corpses were picked up, 62 wounded were captured, and only five people were captured unharmed. Among our trophies were 2 guns, 6 bombers, 10 machine guns, 300 rifles, more than 1000 mines, 720 artillery shells, 20 boxes of hand grenades, 120 boxes of rifle cartridges, significant stocks of flour, millet, rice. We handed over weapons to the border guards, food - to the population of Olochinskaya. And the fortress was blown up.

Rokossovsky thanked all the participants in this battle for the successful completion of the task, especially noting the merits of the gunners. From him came the name of the height at which our firing positions were located: since then it has been called Battery.

But a more difficult battle was already waiting for us. For the defeat at Fukdin and Mishanfu, the Chinese militarists clearly sought to take revenge in Transbaikalia, and our entire Transbaikal group of troops under the command of commander S. S. Vostretsov was ready. this group were: three rifle divisions (21st Perm named after S.S. Kamenev, 35th Siberian and 36th Transbaikal

Red Banner), 5th Separate Kuban Cavalry Brigade, Separate Buryat Mongolian Cavalry Division, two armored trains, an armored division and a Chita air squadron. In total, there were: a little more than six thousand bayonets and 1600 sabers, 88 guns of various calibers, 330 easel and 166 light machine guns, 9 tanks, 32 aircraft.

The enemy, by the beginning of November, concentrated on the Zhalainor-Manchurian direction six infantry brigades, a cavalry division, two armored trains, sapper and other technical units, as well as several detachments formed from Russian White Guards. In general, this grouping consisted of 28,450 bayonets and sabers, 96 machine guns, 96 bombers, 42 guns, 2 armored trains and 5 aircraft.

From the above data it is clear that the Chinese side had a large numerical superiority in manpower, but was inferior to us in technical equipment. The commander of the enemy troops in the Zhalainor-Manchurian direction, Lieutenant General Liang Zhujiang boasted: "I have no doubt about

that we will smash the Red Army and reach Chita." And the agitation and propaganda detachment operating under his auspices, numerous leaflets calling for the "destruction of

USSR" supplemented with a geographical map, on which the Soviet Primorye, Amur Region and Transbaikalia, so to speak, were included in advance within the borders of China.

Further delay on our part became dangerous, and the Revolutionary Military Council of the Special Far Eastern Army decided to preempt the enemy's strike. The idea of the Chzhainor-Manchurian operation, planned under the leadership of V.K. Blucher, boiled down to the following: reliably covering Chita with the main forces, take a deep detour maneuver, break through to the north of the city of Manchuria to the city of Chzhainor, thus cut the enemy grouping and destroy it in parts.

The bypassing subgroup included: the 35th Siberian Red Banner Rifle Division, the 5th Separate Kuban Cavalry Brigade and the Separate Buryat-Mongolian Cavalry DIVISION.

The operation began on November 17, 1929. Under the cover of night, our brigade left the village of Abagaytuevskaya and moved along the eastern bank of the Argun, to the rear of the enemy's Chzhainor grouping. It was bitter cold. There was a strong headwind. Even short fur coats did not warm people.

A short halt was announced about seven kilometers from Abagaytuevskaya. An order followed to wrap the hooves of horses and wheels of guns, charging boxes, wagons with a felt mat in order to silently cross the ice across the Argun.

The ice was still very thin; Nevertheless, by dawn we were on Chinese territory, and a few hours later the forward squadrons and my battery reached the Zhainor-Harbin railway.

A specially assigned half-squadron of cavalymen was already tearing telegraph and telephone wires when a courier train appeared from the direction of Jalainor. And then I saw next to me, on horseback, brigade commander K.K. Rokossovsky.

— Comrade Khetagurov, we must stop the train. Just don't shoot at the wagons," he ordered.

I deployed the battery and opened fire on the railroad embankment. Thundered first volley.

Small flight. With the second volley - a direct hit. The locomotive crawled a few more meters along the torn sleepers and stopped, holding back the mail car that had piled on top of it. Chinese soldiers and officers poured out from other cars. Shooting randomly, they rushed in different directions. They were attacked by saber squadrons, which then instantly surrounded the entire train. Among those who surrendered was the general, convulsively clutching a plump briefcase to his chest. The general was brought to Rokossovsky. From the portfolio of the prisoner were

retrieved

important documents revealing the adventurous plans of the Chinese militarists to seize the Soviet Transbaikalia...

Having crossed the railroad, units of the 5th Kuban Cavalry Brigade reached the rear of the enemy's 17th Infantry Brigade, which was defending the Chzhalainore resistance center. Counterattacks have begun. At the same time, enemy artillery opened heavy fire.

While our 73rd Cavalry Regiment was repulsing the counterattack of the Chinese infantry, large forces of the enemy cavalry deployed on its flank.

— Khetagurov, help me out! shouted the regimental commander Makar Yakimov to me.

The battery hit the Chinese cavalry with buckshot and literally mowed down those who raced ahead. The rest continued to move for some time and also "tasted" our buckshot. The confusion that arose among the enemy was not slow to take advantage of the 73rd cavalry regiment: he completed the battle with a dashing saber blow. The enemy left on the battlefield up to two hundred killed and wounded. Of the surviving Chinese horsemen, thirty-nine surrendered.

Much more dramatic was the development of events in the sector of the 75th Cavalry Regiment, which acted against the White Guard cavalry. I had never before seen such a furious felling. The losses of the White Guards were great, but the 75th cavalry regiment also lost more than seventy people, including the best squadron commander, holder of two orders of the Red Banner, my close friend F.I. Pilipenko. He was severely wounded by an explosive bullet and

died on operating table.

There were losses in our battery, which helped the 75th cavalry regiment: four riders were injured, twenty horses were out of order.

Only in the evening the 5th Kuban Cavalry Brigade, together with the approaching units of the 36th Transbaikalian Rifle Division, captured the Chzhaynyn station

and the railway village adjacent to it. The main forces of the brigade occupied the Fazan, Nos, Krivaya line, pushing barriers in the direction of the Lyubensky fortress.

In the meantime, the 36th Rifle Division reached the southern sector of the Manchurian fortified area and joined there with the 21st Perm Red Banner Rifle Division, which blocked the same fortified area from the west and southwest. Thus, surrounded by our troops was the whole

Zhailin-Manchurian grouping of the enemy. All escape routes were cut off for her.

In order to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, commander S. S. Vostretsov presented an ultimatum to the encircled about unconditional surrender. However, the commander of the Chinese troops, General Liang Zhujiang, refused to capitulate.

The next day, fighting broke out with renewed vigor. Part of the enemy forces tried to break out of the encirclement in the direction of the village of Nos, where the Buryat-Mongolian Cavalry Division was located. This is where our battery comes in. Turning around, she fired four volleys of shrapnel. The Chinese rushed in all directions, some of them lay down.

In this battle, the commander of the Buryat-Mongolian cavalry division Busygin distinguished himself: despite the 30-degree frost, he ordered his horsemen to take off their sheepskin coats and led them on the attack in only tunics.

What is he doing? Freeze people! - K.K. Rokossovsky, who arrived at my observation post, was indignant.

Then Busygin had to make excuses:

- What, comrade brigade commander, would be a cabin in sheepskin coats? We dug them out of the ground blades.

Konstantin Konstantinovich could not help smiling. He obviously liked this badass cavalryman. The daring attack was a success: the enemy lost up to four hundred people killed and wounded.

On the night of November 19, the Chiang Kai-shekists tried to break out of the encirclement even more significant forces. But this attempt, too, was thwarted. Soviet troops skillfully used their fire

superiority.

In the morning, numerous detachments of Chinese cavalry and infantry poured south from the city of Manchuria for the third time. They went ahead, regardless of the losses. Smooth as a table, the field was covered with enemy corpses. And the enemy was again turned back. On his shoulders, the 5th Kuban cavalry brigade, units of the 35th and 36th rifle divisions broke into the city outskirts. But General Liang continued to be cunning: evading immediate surrender, he referred to the fact that it was difficult for him to gather runaway soldiers in a short time.

S. S. Vostretsov showed firmness: the Chiang Kai-shekists were told that in two hours an order would follow to bombard the city with artillery. Only then did they lay down their arms. surrendered captured with his headquarters and General Liang Zhujiang, who dreamed of reaching Chita.

Having thus completed the Chzhalainor-Manchurian operation, the troops of the Transbaikalian group were divided into two operational detachments. One of them, as part of the reinforced 36th Infantry Division, moved to Hailar and reached this important strategic point in fourteen hours, covering a distance of 150 kilometers. The Hailar garrison, not accepting the battle, hurriedly left the city and fled for the passes through the Greater Khingan.

The second operational detachment, composed of the 5th Kuban cavalry brigade and the Buryats of the Mongolian cavalry division, was to pursue the White Guard cavalry, retreating to the Mongolian border. The battles took place in a harsh winter, away from supply bases. The horses were so exhausted that neither our cavalrymen nor the White Guards could already go to horseback.

attacks. When approaching, artillery played a decisive role. Fortunately, we had a well-established supply of ammunition. And yet it was not possible to finally finish off the Whites. Part of their forces slipped into Mongolia, where they were interned.

At the end of December we returned to the city of Manchuria. The Chinese government was forced to enter into peace negotiations.

December 20 Plenipotentiary representatives of the Soviet Union and China

signed an agreement on the elimination of the armed conflict on the CER. The rights of our country to use this road were restored. About three thousand Soviet citizens were released from the Sumbey concentration camp.

For military successes, the Central Executive Committee of the USSR awarded the Order of the Red Banner to the Special Far Eastern

army, the border guard of the Far Eastern Territory and the Amur military flotilla. Many fighters, commanders and political workers were awarded high government awards. Me too was awarded the Order of the Red Banner.

According to official Soviet data, the Red Army in the conflict on the CER lost 199 killed, 27 died of wounds, 22 died of disease, 32 missing, and 729 wounded, shell-shocked and frostbite. Rokossovsky's Cavalry Brigade lost 9 killed and 7 wounded. All these data seem to be significantly underestimated if, according to Khetagurov, in only one attack, Rokossovsky's fighters lost 70 people killed and wounded.

From the memoirs of Khetagurov it is clear that Rokossovsky organized the interaction of cavalry and artillery well. But the memoirist's allegations that the Chinese generals were hatching plan conquests of the Soviet Transbaikalia should most likely be attributed to the propaganda of the military

time, which was supposed to explain to the fighters and commanders why they should operate on Chinese territory. After all, the Chinese army could in no way be equal compete with

Red Army. It was not only a matter of Soviet superiority in weapons and equipment, but, above all, in superiority in the training and moral qualities of the personnel. The Chinese troops at that time were recruited mainly from declassed elements, the soldiers were regularly unpaid and lived off the robbery. It was not so difficult to defeat such an army, which was demonstrated by Ungern's campaign in Mongolia in 1920-1921.

By the way, the most dangerous enemy during the conflict on the CER, as Khetagurov admits, were the Russian White Guards who served in the troops of Chiang Kai-shek. The memoirist's statement that the White detachments went to Mongolia, where they were interned, is doubtful. Mongolia was ruled by a pro-Soviet government and there were units of the Red Army. For the White Guards, surrendering to the Mongolian communists meant certain death. Most likely, they simply left for Manchuria through the deserted Mongolian steppes.

Khetagurov described the return of the brigade to their places of permanent deployment in the following way:

"The return march to Dauria was not easy. It was very cold and windy winter. Prickly snow hit in the face. But we were in a festive mood. We returned home victorious.

Dauria greeted us solemnly. At the entrance to the military town there was a triumphal arch. Flags and happy smiles everywhere.

In the evening, a festive dinner was arranged for the participants of the campaign. Speaking here, our brigade commander K.K. Rokossovsky urged everyone to deeply comprehend the combat experience gained and persistently improve your learning.

And some time later, V.K. Blucher arrived in Dauria. Walking around the barracks of the brigade, accompanied by K.K. Rokossovsky, he also looked into the location of my battery. The battery was in the classroom. Only the daily outfit was in place.

In the evening, the officer on duty reported to me about the conversation between the commander of the OKDVA and the brigade commander. "Is this the same battery that caused the destruction of the Shiveysyan fortress?" asked V.K. Blucher. "She is," Rokossovsky replied.

"I watched her actions near Chzhalaynor," said the commander. "It would be nice to play the Chzhalaynor episode at the next exercises ..."

After that, Khetagurov was seconded to Novocherkassk, for cavalry advanced training courses for command personnel. Seeing him off, Rokossovsky said: "Study diligently. Remember, these courses are under the tutelage of our outstanding cavalry chief Semyon Mikhailovich Budyonny.

For military operations on the CER, Rokossovsky was awarded the third Order of the Red Banner on February 13, 1930. Shortly before this joyful event, in January, he was transferred to the post of commander-commissar of the 7th Cavalry Division named after the English Proletariat of the 3rd Cavalry Corps, stationed in the Belarusian Special Military District.

The certification of 1930, made on the basis of the first results of his activities as division commander, sounded quite favorable for Rokossovsky on the whole, although some criticism had already appeared here: "Operational and tactical training is good. In the most difficult situations, he orients himself quickly and well. Capable commander, energetic and determined. It has a strong will and great pride, which sometimes gives rise to stubbornness. Disciplined. Knows cavalry. As a division commander, the one-man commander is theoretically well prepared, he covers the work of the division, but there is still little practice in commanding a division. For a relatively short

stay in the corps

established the authority of the single commander, both in the division and in front of the corps command. The division is well prepared in all respects. He paid attention to mob work, but not enough, partly due to the fact that he worked without a division headquarters. Noticeably many

works on himself and has all the prerequisites to develop in himself the best qualities necessary for a great cavalry commander. By nature, the person is very modest. May be the commander of a higher mechanized unit.

Soon, all the noted shortcomings were corrected by Rokossovsky, and criticism disappeared from the certification of 1931. It was noted there: "The division has great achievements in all areas of combat

preparation. The headquarters of the division is well put together, its preparation had a positive effect on helping the lower echelons. Maneuvers ensured

success in command and control of the division's complex task of defense on a broad front. The division has a championship in a number of competitions on a district scale, as well as a championship in all-Union competitions. The command structure is knocked together,

and tov.

Rokossovsky works a lot on the education of the command staff. Competent commander, teaches

And

educates correctly. Persistent, strong-willed commander. Knows the tactics and use of other types of weapons. Energetic, clear and disciplined. Well organized and

run

classes with

division commander. Very attentive, never misleads elders, fair. The position of the division commander is quite consistent.

The fact that Rokossovsky did not mislead senior bosses is worthy of being noted

Ospecially False reports to the top, exaggerating the successes of their troops and downplaying them

losses became a real scourge of the Red Army, especially during the Great Patriotic War. On the contrary, the successes of the enemy were usually

understated, and their losses were greatly exaggerated. As we shall see later, Konstantin Konstantinovich also had to deal with this more than once. Although it

should be recognized that during the years of the Great Patriotic War, Rokossovsky was not without sin in this regard: sometimes he had to distort the true situation in order to ward off Stalin's anger from his subordinates.

Briefly touching in his memoirs of the early 1930s, Rokossovsky recalled: "The 3rd Cavalry Corps, then commanded by S.K. Timoshenko and where I was the commander of the 7th Samara Cavalry Division named after the English proletariat. The corps commander was respected by all of us horsemen.

More than that, love. And in the high post of People's Commissar, he retained the same ease of handling and comradely accessibility. Here, among other things, it probably contained a hidden gratitude for the fact that Semyon Konstantinovich worked for him in 1940, seeking release from prison.

In February 1932, Rokossovsky received another promotion - he became the commander of a separate cavalry division. He was appointed commander and commissar of the 15th Separate Kuban Cavalry Division, which was part of the Separate Red Banner Far Eastern Army (OKDVA). The Far East began to attract special attention of the Soviet leadership after

like in 1931
Japanese troops occupied Manchuria.

However, this time Konstantin Konstantinovich did not have a relationship with the commander of OKDVA BV. K. Blucher, who had a difficult character and increasingly applied to the bottle. In 1932, Rokossovsky was again given a more critical assessment: "Combat training of the division: tactical - good, firepower - excellent, physical training - satisfactory. Equestrian technology has not received due attention. The headquarters of the division and the headquarters of the regiments are not sufficiently cobbled together. In Marxist-Leninist studies, the commanding staff is unsatisfactorily prepared.

Available
a big shift in the preparation of special units, and especially the mechanized regiment. The horse stock is in good condition. The positive aspects of Comrade are noted. Rokossovsky, but along with them it was noted that Comrade Rokossovsky was determined to transfer to another district, which was the result of an underestimation of the military danger in the Far East. Recently, this mood has been noticeable survives."

Obviously, because of the conflict with Blucher, Rokossovsky wanted to transfer to another military district. However, this time he had to serve under the command of Vasily Konstantinovich for four whole years. Blucher was then one of Stalin's favorites, who tried to meet his needs in everything. In addition, the Far East was considered as one of the main theaters of a future war, where the Red Army would have to grapple with the Japanese imperial army. Then, with the light hand of People's Commissar of Defense K. E. Voroshilov, they said that when Blucher was in the Far East, one could

have two boxes less. It was later, in the autumn of 1938, after a mediocre operation against the Japanese in the area of Lake Khasan, Blucher would lose Stalin's favor, be arrested and die from beatings during the investigation.

Probably, Rokossovsky eventually managed to improve relations with Blucher, who, in my turn, could not help but appreciate the commanding and organizational qualities of Konstantin Konstantinovich. As a result, the certification of 1934 sounded much more favorable for Rokossovsky: "A good drill

commander who knows cavalry business. Personally disciplined and executive, but V

in relation to subordinates is not demanding enough. Honest and straightforward commander. Enjoys the authority of all subordinates. He knows how to organize combat training, he knows all its details well. A good educator, he uses the method

of personal demonstration. Tactically and operationally prepared, possesses combat initiative. Excellent horsemanship.

Insufficiently engaged in the preparation of special units. Little deals with administrative and economic issues and issues of material and consumer services of the units. The division is well trained in all types of combat training. Certified for the position of commander of the cavalry corps.

By order of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR No. 2484 dated November 26, 1935, Rokossovsky was awarded the personal military rank of "commander". In dealing with subordinates, he was a SOFT person, which the higher authorities could easily mistake for softness and lack of exactingness. In fact, Konstantin Konstantinovich knew how to ensure that his instructions and orders were carried out as accurately and on time as possible. Administrative and economic issues, strictly speaking, should be dealt with not by the division commander, but by the head of logistics. And it is not entirely clear why two years earlier Rokossovsky was praised for the good preparation of special units, and now they

were not up to the mark.

Rokossovsky had to wait almost two years for promotion as a corps commander. Only in February 1936, he was appointed commander and commissar of the 5th Cavalry Corps, which was part of the Leningrad Military District. The headquarters of the corps was located in Pskov. This is how the certification of that year sounded: "Comrade. ROKOSSOVSKY is a well-trained commander.

He loves military affairs, is interested in it and constantly follows its development. Combat commander, with will and energy. Disciplined, patient and humble. During the six months of his stay in the district as a commander, he showed the ability to quickly raise the combat training of the newly formed divisions. On maneuvers, the divisions acted satisfactorily (that is, not "good", and even more so not "excellent", but Rokossovsky was rightly not blamed for this - one could not expect anything else from just

formed divisions. - B.S.). Commander ROKOSSOVSKY himself showed quite good

ability to understand the operational situation and carry out the operation. Pays less attention to economic issues. Well, economic issues, I repeat, are still the competence of the chief of logistics, first of all.

However, regardless of all the praise and encouragement in the service to Rokossovsky, as well as to many other Soviet officers, the danger approached, later called the "Great Terror". On May 22, Marshal M.N. Tukhachevsky was arrested in Kuibyshev, and on May 26, after many hours

interrogations with intense beatings, he gave the first confession about the existence of an extensive conspiracy in the Red Army. Immediately after that, arrests of commanding officers began in all military districts, reaching unprecedented proportions both because of the zeal of the ranks of the NKVD, so and because of denunciations that the red commanders wrote in abundance against each other.

On June 5, 1937, in the name of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR K. E. Voroshilov, a letter arrived from Transbaikalia, registered by the Secretariat under the number 19a. It said:

"We consider it absolutely necessary to seriously check through the NKVD bodies the following persons from composition of the troops of the Trans-Baikal Military District for suspicious links with counter-revolutionary elements:

1. ROKOSSOVSKY K. K. - former. the commander of the 15th Cavalry Division, now the commander of the 5th Cavalry Corps, was closely associated with Tchaikovsky and Gorbunov. Pole. Serious verification of social background is required. Had a craving for overseas work...

Commander of the ZabVO commander Gryaznov
Member of the Military Council of the ZabVO, corps commissar Shestakov.

Soon, I. K. Gryaznov and V. N. Shestakov, who signed the letter, were arrested and shot, as before that, division commander M. A. Gorbunov and commander K. A. Tchaikovsky. They failed to save their own heads with other people's necks. What was meant by Rokossovsky's craving for foreign work, not really

It's clear. Most likely, he wanted to go on a business trip to Mongolia again. Or maybe Konstantin Konstantinovich was eager to volunteer in Spain, to help the Republicans?

Comcor Kassian Alexandrovich Tchaikovsky, born in 1893, came from the nobility

and

was a great friend of Tukhachevsky. Together with Mikhail Nikolayevich, they were imprisoned by the Germans in the Ingolstadt fortress. Before becoming deputy head of the Combat Training Directorate of the Red Army, until February 1936, he

commanded the 11th mechanized corps in Transbaikalia, next to which the 5th cavalry division, commanded by Rokossovsky, was stationed. Tchaikovsky was arrested on May 21, almost simultaneously with Tukhachevsky, and shot, according to the so-called "Stalin's lists", on June 10, 1938 in Chita. Then, after rehabilitation in 1956, his relatives were informed that he allegedly died in custody from acute heart failure on April 23, 1938.

On June 13, 1937, Rokossovsky was removed from command of the corps and placed at the disposal of the People's Commissariat of Defense. On June 27, the divisional party organization expelled him from the party "for the loss of political vigilance." In August, the former commander was arrested by the NKVD

By

charged with a crime under Art. 58-1 "b" (treason against the motherland committed by servicemen) - participation in an anti-Soviet conspiracy in the army was meant. Since August 17, 1937, Konstantin Konstantinovich was kept in the internal prison of the UGB NKVD of the Leningrad Region - the famous "Crosses". In the fate of Rokossovsky, as he himself noted, his nationality played a negative role. Having a sad experience of imprisonment behind him, he later wrote in his autobiography of 1948 that he considers himself Russian, since "... he was born in Russia and spent all the years of his conscious life in Russia, in addition, my mother is Russian."

There were other testimonies against Rokossovsky. Here is what the head of the sanitary department of the ZabVO, military doctor of the 1st rank K., said during interrogation: "Rokossovsky, the former commander of the 15th cavalry division, decomposed the division with his wrecking work, did not supervise combat training, turned the territory of the garrison into a solid garbage cluttered hearth. The garrison was left without a bathhouse, water and electricity." On July 13, 1937, Tchaikovsky testified during the investigation: "In the cavalry, the Trotskyist organization included ... Rokossovsky K.K., the former commander of the 15th cavalry division, at the present time the commander of the cavalry corps in Pskov. Recruited by Gryaznov." The former chief of staff of the Trans-Baikal Military District, Divisional Commander Ya. G. Rubinov, also testified against Rokossovsky. On July 5, 1938, he stated that Tchaikovsky told him that Rokossovsky was involved in a spy organization. Kassian Alexandrovich had already been shot by that time, but Yakov Grigorievich probably did not know about this. The same fate befell him a few months later, on 2 October.

And here is what the head of the intelligence department of the district headquarters, Major Yu. G. Ruben, said during interrogation on January 6, 1938: In a conversation, Tchaikovsky told me that he was connected with Rokossovsky through espionage work ... Later, in 1935, Tchaikovsky, Rokossovsky and Slutsky (A. B. Slutsky, commander of the 6th mechanized brigade, also arrested and shot. - B. S.), MK (from the mechanized corps. - B. S.),

colonel.

In a conversation with Tchaikovsky in the presence of other persons, he (probably a typo here, and I mean Tchaikovsky. - B.S.) reiterated that Rokossovsky, Slutsky and Proffen (G. G. Proffen, major, head of the intelligence department of the 11- mechanized corps. - B.S.) are associated with him in counter-revolutionary and espionage work. In support of this, Rokossovsky said: "Yes, work together, keep the answer together ..." I know that back in 1932, Rokossovsky, through espionage work, was personally connected with the head of the Japanese military mission in Harbin, Colonel Komatsubara, according to Rokossovsky, he met with Komatsubara in Dauria during the official visit of the latter to resolve issues related to the internment of the troops of the Chinese General Su Bin-Bien.

Georgy Georgievich Proffen, who was shot in June, on January 2, 1938, also gave indications for

Rokossovsky: "At the end of 1935, speaking of Rokossovsky, Tchaikovsky said that he was a wonderful person with whom he had established friendly relations, and that Rokossovsky was his

someone you can trust." Surely tank commanders and cavalrymen were friends and

they often gathered at joint parties, but they were clearly not discussing conspiratorial and espionage cases there.

With the help of this kind of false testimony, given under the strongest pressure of the investigation, up to

before the use of physical force, the case of the so-called "anti-Soviet military-Trotskyist organization of the 11th mechanized corps of the ZabVO" was fabricated, within the framework of which Rokossovsky was arrested.

The only thing that, perhaps, corresponded to the truth in the testimony was Rokossovsky's phrase that "work together, keep the answer together." But it must have been taken out of context. Most likely, it was about the fact that cavalrymen and tankers were engaged in combat training together, participated in maneuvers together, and now they must be jointly responsible for the results. Also

Tchaikovsky could well tell

Proffen that Rokossovsky was a wonderful person, that he had developed with him

friendly relations and that he is "one of his own" - that is, a communist, like the rest, who cares about improving the preparation of the Red Army for a future war.

Rokossovsky, as well as the commander of the Belarusian Military District, commander of the 1st rank I.P. Belov, commanders I.K. Gryaznov and N.V. military fascist conspiracy in the Red Army.

Velikanov was shot, as well as all of the above.

At the preliminary investigation, Rokossovsky denied all charges and refused to sign interrogation protocols, including a confession of espionage in favor of Polish and Japanese intelligence. It was not enough for the investigators of one military conspiracy, they certainly had to make the accused spies in order to show that all conspiracies are the result of the intrigues of the accursed imperialists.

The former adjutant of Rokossovsky, Boris Nikolaevich Zakhatsky, claimed: "He was wrote

wild denunciation: that he is a Polish and Japanese spy. Investigators were unable to extract any confessions from Rokossovsky. Apparently, he even mocked

them. He named names, and when it came to checking the testimony, it turned out that the named people had died before 1917. Let me explain that

it was not I who named these names; they tried me

make them

pronounce. In response, I quipped that, they say, "you have the dead, it turns out, they give evidence." Zakhatsky also claimed:

"One day a letter came from a former

NKVD investigator who once led

the Rokossovsky case. The marshal put a resolution "Ignore" on it. The letter contained a request for a meeting in order to explain why the investigator behaved

this way, apparently, this tormented him. Soon another letter arrived. And again, Konstantin Konstantinovich painted: "Ignore." It was unpleasant for him to return to

this topic. In addition, he believed that they apologized to him. Indeed, in March 1940, after the release of Rokossovsky, Marshal

Tymoshenko

(then People's Commissar of Defense) asked him to forget about the three years of imprisonment as an unfortunate misunderstanding

and said that

he was reinstated in the party, in rank and position.

In his autobiography, dated April 4, 1940, Rokossovsky wrote very briefly: "From August 1937 to March 1940. was under investigation by the NKVD. Released due to

termination of the case." It is only natural that he did not like to think about the time he spent in prison. According to the testimony of the grandson of Marshal Konstantin Vilyevich, he never spoke about the time of his imprisonment even with the closest people: "Only once, when my mother, many years after the war, asked him why he always carries a pistol with him, he said: "If for me they will come again, I will not give myself up alive. From the people who communicated with him during that period of time, we knew how much he had to endure, we knew that he behaved with dignity, did not slander anyone,

nothing is

signed. (It turns out that Rokossovsky, almost until the last years of his life, did not rule out that the illegal arrest could be repeated. And, apparently, in prison he had to endure something so terrible that he was ready to sell his life dearly, just not to be there again. - B.S.)

As for the life of the family at that time, my mother and grandmother also had a hard time. Before his arrest, grandfather commanded the 5th cavalry corps in Pskov, was ex officio the head of the Pskov

garrison. Since Pskov was a border town at that time, immediately after the grandfather's arrest, mother and grandmother, as members of the family of an enemy of the people, were deported from there and settled in Armavir, with friends.

Grandmother was interrupted by odd jobs, she could not find a permanent job. How

only

found out that her husband was under arrest, tried to get rid of her under any pretext. When there was no work, they lived by borrowing money from the savings bank secured by the bonds of the State Compulsory Loan, to which grandfather subscribed, like all executives at that time. Mom told me a wild incident that happened to her at school, when the director, having learned that her grandfather was "sitting", came to the lesson and said: "Children, I want you all to know that among you is the daughter of an enemy of the people. Ada, get up so that everyone can see you!" Mom didn't go to this school anymore. However, not all of them were like that. There were also kind, sympathetic

people who were not afraid, no matter what, to help and support those in trouble...

Mom told how she and her grandmother, after a long absence of news from her grandfather, decided to check if he was alive. One parcel per month could be sent to the Lubyanka for the arrested person. If the transmission was accepted, it meant that the prisoner was still alive, they did not accept it - alas. Grandmother was not allowed to travel to Moscow, as she had to check in at work every day, and she decided to send her mother to the capital. Of course, the risk was great, because they could find out that my mother was the daughter of an enemy of the people. What good, they would send her to the camp under the guise of escaping from exile. But she was lucky

On the train, my mother came across good people who told me how to get to the Lubyanka in Moscow. The transfer was accepted - the grandfather was alive.

I don't know anything about torture, but my grandmother told me that they beat my grandfather hard and he came out of prison without front teeth. I had to do prosthetics ... I was proud of my grandfather: despite the beatings, he held on, in the cases brought against his other associates, there is no testimony against them, he did not utter a word. As far as we know, Marshal Tymoshenko, People's Commissar for Defense, interceded for my grandfather, and he was released.

In his memoirs, Rokossovsky spoke about the repressions of 1937-1938 in a veiled, casual way. And, apparently, it was not only censorship. When, during the years of perestroika, those fragments of memoirs that encountered censorship obstacles during the life of the marshal saw the light of day, not a word was said about repressions. Apparently, the marshal tried to forget about the arrest and subsequent imprisonment as

terrible dream. In "Soldier's Duty," Konstantin Konstantinovich wrote: "At the end of the thirties, serious mistakes were made. Our military personnel also suffered, which could not but affect the organization and training of troops. It turned out quite in the Soviet style: in general, everything is fine, there are only some shortcomings from which our military suffered.

In the drafts, more lengthy arguments of the marshal on this topic remained:

"By the time described, a whole reform was carried out and was being carried out, contributing to the strengthening of military discipline in the troops and the establishment of proper military order. The troubled years of 1937-1939 imposed a heavy correction on the armed forces of the Red Army. From

of the old cadres, especially (crossed out: the highest) level of the highest command staff, literally a few survived. Most of the young people lacked practical team experience for their positions. All this was aggravated by the loss of self-confidence and fear of responsibility. And the most terrible was the widespread suspicion and distrust of each other. Such vices as careerism, servility, slander, and intrigue flourished in a lush bouquet.

How the top cadres were replaced by young ones, I give the following example:

In July 1937 (crossed out: returned) by the newly appointed commander of the troops of the Leningrad Military District Dybenko, who arrived instead of Comrade Shaposhnikov, the highest

command staff of the district, among which I happened to be, the commander of the 5th Cavalry Corps.

At this meeting, Dybenko ordered us to select 2 lieutenants for each of us.

and during

three months to prepare them as their deputies.

Miracles do not happen in nature. No matter how talented such an officer may be, he cannot be a full-fledged commander without going through almost consistently large command experience.

And

especially in wartime."

Elsewhere in the handwritten drafts of his memoirs, Konstantin Konstantinovich wrote:

"Led by the Communist Party (crossed out: at a rapid pace), our country flourished. The national economy developed at a rapid pace. And the industry was already

in

able

to equip our armed forces with new military equipment that meets the requirements of the time.

But the enemy did not sleep. And he succeeded, by means of a heinous provocation, in inciting a psychosis of suspicion and mistrust in our country, which in 1937-1938 entailed mass repressions of innocent Soviet people.

This had a particularly sensitive effect on our armed forces, which during these years lost most of their best and most experienced senior and senior commanders.

composition".

This draft has been crossed out. Instead, the marshal wrote another version of this episode:

"At the same time, guided by unfounded suspicions, this command staff, in his

overwhelming majority, was repressed or removed from the leadership of the training of the armed forces. Young cadres were involved in the leadership of the troops, who did not have sufficient life and command practical experience - according to the positions for which they

were appointed. How this happened, I will refer to only one example, as an eyewitness. In July 1937, having replaced Marshal of the Soviet Union Shaposhnikov, who at

that time commanded the Leningrad Military District, General Dybenko convened the entire senior command staff of the district troops and announced

to us that, having returned to the troops entrusted to us, each would choose 2 -x best lieutenants and within 2-3 months prepare deputies from them for

occupied by us

positions. To the question asked from our side - what should we do after that, - the answer was from his side that there would be a place for us. Indeed, such a place was found for almost all of us (crossed out: and then Dybenko himself followed us all).

In another draft entitled "The Beginning of the 2nd Chapter", Rokossovsky wrote:

"After thirty months of imprisonment, he was released under investigation and fully rehabilitated. He was released, asking himself an unresolved question - to whom and for what purpose everything that was done in 1937 was needed.

After all, the blow was dealt to the most trained cadres of the leadership of the Red Army, who by their deeds and blood proved their boundless devotion to the Communist Party, Soviet power and the socialist Motherland.

The consequences (crossed out: exterminated) of the dirty work done had already affected the Finnish campaign. The Red Army was exposed by the time of the imminent events. The long-term work of the party on the education and training of military personnel was brought to naught. In leading positions in the link of the highest command staff, with the exception of a few, there were little experienced, not prepared for leadership in wartime, personnel. Devotion and courage alone for waging war in modern conditions was not enough.

Together with Rokossovsky in the Leningrad "Crosses" sat Vladimir Vatslavovich Rachinsky, later on a well-known physicist, head of the department of the Timiryazev Agricultural Academy and, like Konstantin Konstantinovich, a Pole by nationality. He was arrested on November 24, 1937 and placed in the "Crosses" as a member of the family of a traitor to the Motherland. It was on this day that his father, mathematics teacher Vatslav Yakovlevich Rachinsky, was shot, and he himself was charged with espionage and anti-Soviet agitation. V. V. Rachinsky

recalled:

"I was 17 years old and I was thrown into this hell. I was not to blame for anything. But when I came to the cell, cell No. 6, of the UNKVD investigation prison in Leningrad, it turned out that everyone was sitting there, absolutely everyone, innocent. No one considered himself guilty of anything before the Soviet state. It was some kind of nightmare, some kind of trap for honest, innocent people. In cell number 6

with an area of about

100 m², about 100 people were packed, sleeping on two floors, one on the floor, shoulder to shoulder, the second of wooden beds reclining against the wall and planks on the goats.

Who were these people sitting in the cell? The majority were intellectuals, doctors, teachers, party workers, government workers, engineers, military men, artists, etc. Even shoe-blacks, the Asors, were sitting, such a Persian people that we had a kind of monopoly on

shoe cleaning.

In the cell sat major leaders of Leningrad, for example, deputy. Chairman of the Leningrad City Executive Committee; major engineers, for example, the warship design engineer Brzezinski; major military leaders, for example, K. K. Rokossovsky; major artists, for example, soloist of the Leningrad Opera and Ballet Theater baritone Tert.

One could write a whole story called "Chamber No. 6".

How many people, so many characters and destinies. And all this was "cooked in one pot". For me it was the first, albeit very dramatic, school of life, my first life university.

Though it would be better if it wasn't. But since it happened, then from this I also extracted some kind of vital

school. K.K. Rokossovsky told me: "Vladimir, all this will do you good, unless, of course, you draw wrong political conclusions." He considered all these reprisals

How

betrayal by the NKVD and also naively believed that Stalin was not to blame, what's to blame

his treacherous environment.

People get used to everything and adapt.

Even in those difficult conditions, in order to somehow pass the time, those sitting in the cell arranged conversations, lectures, played home-made dominoes made

from bread. Even I gave a number of lectures

By

the structure of matter, atomic and nuclear physics. K. K. Rokossovsky led stories about his military

exploits in the civil war, in particular, in Siberia and the Far East. This illustrious commander had something to tell. Anyone who knew anything told everyone. The

defendants were summoned from the cell for interrogations. Everyone already knew that during interrogations they were beaten and tortured.

Tormented, beaten people

were brought from interrogations. Some were forced to stand for days - and such was

torture. Everyone was forced to sign false protocols of interrogation slanderous of themselves and others. Those who refused to sign the false protocol were beaten until the false protocol was signed. There were persistent people who stubbornly did not sign. But these were relatively few. K.K. Rokossovsky, while he was in the same cell with me, did not sign the false protocol. But he was a courageous and strong man, tall, broad-shouldered. He was also beaten."

We add that Rachinsky was soon transferred to the Ivanovo prison near the Finland Station. He never admitted his guilt and was released on January 31, 1939 as part of the so-called "Beria thaw" for lack of evidence of the charges. Rokossovsky, on the other hand, had to wait for more than a year for freedom. Perhaps the point was that Rachinsky was a simple first-year student, and Rokossovsky was a divisional commander, a corps commander, and the sanction of Stalin himself was required for his release.

V. V. Rachinsky also recalled how, after his release from the newspapers, he learned
What

"Rokossovsky was released. As later, relatively recently, it turned out that he was released later than me, in 1940. I saw his portrait in the Pravda newspaper, when a whole galaxy of military commanders of the Soviet Army were awarded the military ranks of generals. I was very glad about this news about the release of K.K. Rokossovsky. Say I've never in my whole life

Not

used acquaintances with K. K. Rokossovsky. Firstly, I did not want to remind him of cell number 6, and secondly, it is not known how some of the "guards" would have interpreted my attempt to establish contact with such a large person. I was no longer a naive boy. In my heart I always thought he wouldn't push me away. Therefore, I have always kept and keep the sacred memory of this great Man.

I am inclined to trust Vladimir Vatslavovich. Sitting in the overcrowded cell of the "Crosses", Konstantin

Konstantinovich could really think that everything that was happening was the result of abuses on the part of Stalin's entourage, and the great Stalin knew nothing about repressions. According to the memories

General I. V. Baldynov, who was imprisoned along with Rokossovsky, Konstantin

Konstantinovich, returning to the cell after interrogations, each time stubbornly repeated: "In no way

case, do not make false confessions, do not slander either yourself or the other. If you have to die, then with a clear conscience.

"They beat me ... Together, three of us, one cannot cope with me! I held on, I knew that if I signed it - certain death," Konstantin

Konstantinovich recalled at a meeting with students of the M.V. Frunze Military Academy in April 1962.

In the personal file of the marshal, a certificate is stored:

"Issued to Count Rokossovsky Konstantin Konstantinovich, descended from citizens 6.

Poland, Warsaw, that from August 17, 1937 to March 22, 1940 he was kept in the Inner Prison of the UGB NKVD LO and on March 22, 1940 he was released from custody due to the termination of his case. Investigation file No. 25 358 1937

Head of the UGB prison (signature) Head
of the Chancellery (signature)

Right: pom. Head of the 1st Division (signature) April 4, 1940.

In his autobiography, compiled on the same day, Rokossovsky, indicating his party membership, noted that in March 1919 he joined the party organization of the 2nd Ural separate cavalry division of the 30th rifle division in the RCP (b), and emphasized: "I was not subjected to party penalties . He was not a member of other parties and never deviated or wavered from the general line of the party. He was a steadfast member of the party, firmly believing in the correctness of all decisions of the Central Executive Committee, led leader comrade. Stalin."

The investigation file of Rokossovsky was destroyed in the early 1960s by order of Khrushchev. Since there were no publications on this topic, various rumors were born. They said that Konstantin Konstantinovich was nevertheless sentenced to ten years and spent some time in camps, either in Vorkuta, or in Transbaikalia, or in Norilsk. There were even people who allegedly saw him in the camps or in the transit prison in Minusinsk. In fact, as is clear from the reference cited above, Rokossovsky was not sent to any camps, but remained under investigation at Kresty. From there, he was only once brought to Moscow for a meeting of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. Then he had to spend some time

Butyrskaya prison, about which he later spoke to his driver S.I. Mozzhukhin. Rokossovsky was accused of being recruited as a Polish spy in the mid-1920s by his

former colleague in the 5th Kargopol Dragoon Regiment and former commander of the Consolidated Ural Regiment of the Red Army, Adolf Yushkevich.

Their combat paths diverged in May 1919, when Yushkevich was seriously wounded and did not return to his regiment after the hospital.

At the court

session, Rokossovsky stated that Yushkevich could not recruit him in any way, since on October 28, 1920 he had died heroically in battle with the

Wrangelites in Northern Tavria, and referred to the number

newspapers

"Red Star", which described this battle. As a result, the court session ended without a verdict and the case was returned for further investigation. The trial took place at the

beginning of 1939, already during the period of the "Beria thaw", and this can explain that the Military Collegium did not stamp the death sentence prepared

in advance. Rokossovsky was returned to Kresty.

There are also rumors that Rokossovsky survived because he agreed to be an intra-chamber "hen", that is, a snitch. Note that there is no evidence of this in documents or in

the memoirs of former prisoners or officials of the NKVD have not yet been found. Meanwhile
V

The available evidence of Rokossovsky's cellmates contains facts that directly contradict the version of the "brood hen". Both Rachinsky and Baldynov confirm

not only that Rokossovsky was beaten, but also that he urged his cellmates not to make false confessions under any circumstances. Usually, the mother

hens behave differently, advising you to admit at least something so that the investigators stop beating you. In addition, the "hens" themselves were

usually not beaten.

It should also be pointed out that consent to snitching usually did not guarantee
softening

sentence, especially if it was about people of high enough rank and those accused under "execution" articles. For example, the well-known playwright and

one of the leaders of the RAPP V. M. Kirshon, a close friend of the head of the NKVD G. M. Yagoda, agreed to cooperate with the investigation after his arrest

and was placed in Yagoda's cell as a "brood hen", about which the relevant reports with detailed records of their conversations.

Cooperation with the

authorities, however, did not save Kirshon from execution. Rokossovsky according to his position and the severity of the charges

Also

shone the shooting.

On the other hand, a certain mystery of the Rokossovsky case remains. Why was the investigation taking so long?

— two and a half years? After all, usually Chekists fit in six months or a year, and sometimes even three months. The story of Yushkevich in itself does not explain such a long delay. It is possible that at different times the investigation intended to let Rokossovsky on different cases - whether

By

Transbaikal military-Trotskyist organization, either through a conspiracy in Pskov, or in general along the "Polish line". Rokossovsky's biography in this regard opened up a number of possibilities, and it is possible that the investigators sorted them out sequentially, which dragged out the investigation. In addition, after Yezhov was replaced by Beria in November 1938, the investigators most likely changed, which could also drag out the case. It remains to be hoped that someday in the archives of the FSB there will be some materials related to the Rokossovsky case and that could shed light on why Rokossovsky was more fortunate than many others.

In March 1940, Rokossovsky was released and appointed to command the same 5th Cavalry Corps that he commanded before his arrest. Most of the released were left in their previous ranks - brigade commander, division commander, etc.

Rokossovsky, as a sign of special trust, in May 1940 was awarded the newly introduced rank of "major general". Since his corps was being transferred to Ukraine, to the western borders that spring, the new People's Commissar for Defense Timoshenko sent

Rokossovsky in

order of the commander of the Kyiv military district G.K. Zhukov. Rokossovsky and Timoshenko had long-standing friendly relations (in the early 1930s, the future People's Commissar commanded the 3rd Cavalry Corps, and Rokossovsky commanded the 7th Samara Cavalry Division, which was part of this corps). It was Timoshenko, who commanded the Soviet troops during the breakthrough of the Mannerheim Line and fell into favor with Stalin, who named the name of Rokossovsky among those who needed to be released from prison. Later there was a legend that Stalin, at a meeting, asked Rokossovsky for forgiveness for two and a half years in Kresty, but this is just a legend - Iosif Vissarionovich was not like that to publicly ask for forgiveness from anyone.

In the drafts of his memoirs, Rokossovsky wrote:

"I must say that Stalin was a good psychologist. He understood the state of the commander in a difficult situation and with his warm attitude, expressed in words, he knew how to cheer up, calm and inspire, and the most valuable thing that could be learned from a conversation with him was

a feeling of great trust on his part in a person. This made a huge impression on me. Usually, after each such conversation, the army was strengthened with various means and people. Help was sometimes very modest, but then we were everything

glad. It was really
really hard."

This fragment of the memoirs proves that Konstantin Konstantinovich understood that everything in the country, including in relation to the Red Army, is done on Stalin's orders. It is unlikely that during the war years he continued to believe that the NKVD could independently, without the knowledge of the Secretary General, fabricate a case against him, a high-ranking commander of the Red Army.

Now Rokossovsky was subordinate to Zhukov, who back in the early 1930s was his subordinate. Probably, Konstantin Konstantinovich was a little offended. He could imagine what heights he would have reached if not for his arrest and two and a half years in prison. It is quite possible that he, and not Zhukov, would have led the Soviet troops in the battles at Khalkhin Gol, since he had extensive experience in serving both in Mongolia and in the regions of the Soviet Far East bordering on it. And after this victory, he could well become, following the example of Zhukov, the commander of the Kyiv Special Military District or the chief of the General Staff. Perhaps after the beginning of the Great

The Patriotic War would have been better for the army and the country if Rokossovsky had been in the place of M.P. Kirponos or G.K. Zhukov. Konstantin Konstantinovich was sure that he would have coped better with the

corresponding duties than these generals. It is possible, for example, that, unlike Kirponos, at the beginning of September 1941 he would have risked starting the retreat of the troops of the Southwestern Front from the Kiev

"cauldron" even without the sanction of the Stavka and thereby would have saved a significant part of them from

destruction. True, at the same time, Konstantin Konstantinovich would still have a great chance of dying, like Kirponos, or being captured. And at the post chief

of the General Staff, he, perhaps, would have been able to defend before Stalin the point of view that it is not worth inflicting

on the second day of the war, poorly prepared counterattacks against the invading German troops, and even in the conditions of enemy air supremacy in the air. In Rokossovsky's memoirs hard

criticized the decision of Stalin and Zhukov to launch such counterattacks, believing that they only led to unjustified losses in people and equipment.

But in general, I think if Rokossovsky had been at the beginning of the Great Patriotic War in Zhukov's place, this would not

have had a significant impact on the overall course of the war. After all, the defeats of the Red Army in the initial period of the war were determined rather by the general level of its training and

features of the Stalinist strategy, and not the military talents of individual commanders. And towards the end of the war, the "Polish factor" in Rokossovsky's

biography would have worked anyway, and

would have been removed from the front aimed at Berlin, since the capital was to be taken by a representative of the indigenous nationality.

The time for "disputes

about Russian priority" was just around the corner

And

persecution of "rootless cosmopolitans".

Rokossovsky recalled:

"The corps was transferred to Ukraine, was still on the way, and the People's Commissar for the time being sent me at the disposal of

the commander of

the Kyiv Special Military District, General of the Army G.K. Zhukov. I was supposed to help in checking the troops preparing for the liberation

campaign in Bessarabia. IN

mine

In the presence of the people's commissar, he informed the commander of the district by telephone.

I was included in the group of generals who worked under the leadership of the district commander. We spent all the time in units. General

Zhukov's

instructions were interesting and allowed me to

understand the strengths and weaknesses of our troops. But we did not have long to work with him in Ukraine: Georgy Konstantinovich Zhukov

left for Moscow for

the post of Chief of the General Staff, and I, returning from Bessarabia, took command of the corps.

This time the cavalry corps had to be commanded for six months. In November, Konstantin Konstantinovich took over the 9th

mechanized

corps that was being formed. It consisted of three divisions: the 131st Motorized Colonel N.V. Kalinin, the 35th Panzer Major General N.A.

Novikov and

20th Panzer Colonel M. E. Katukov. The latter fell ill before the start of World War II, and the 20th Panzer Division entered the

battle under the command of his

deputy colonel

V. M. Chernyaeva. The chief of staff of the corps was Major General A. G. Maslov.

The corps reported directly to the headquarters of the Kyiv Special Military District. Like other formations, he intensively prepared for war.

Rokossovsky recalled:

"Frankly speaking, we did not believe that Germany would sacredly observe the treaty concluded with the Soviet Union. It was clear that

she would still

attack us. But the treaty gave us the opportunity

gain time to strengthen our defenses and deprive the imperialists of the hope of creating a united anti-Soviet front.

How long this "branch" will last, on our corps scale, it was not given to know. However, we did not waste time. First of all, we focused our attention on the training of commanders and staffs. There were command and staff outings in the field with means of communication and designated troops, war games on maps and field trips along the most probable routes of movement of the corps in case of a sudden war. They obliged all officers to ensure the daily combat readiness of subunits and units, without waiting for full staffing ...

In May 1941, the new commander of the Kyiv Special Military District, M.P. Kirponos, conducted a field trip on a front-line scale (that is, in fact, reconnaissance. - B.S.). Our mechanized corps also took part in it, interacting with the 5th combined arms army in the direction of Rovno, Lutsk, Kovel ...

I involuntarily recalled my service in Primorye and Transbaikalia in 1921-1935. At the slightest activity of the "neighbor" or in the event of the movement of its units on the other side of the border, our troops were always ready to give a worthy rebuff. All formations and units located in the border zone were in constant combat readiness, determined by the clock. There was a clearly developed plan for covering and deploying the main forces; it changed in accordance with changes in the general situation at the given theatre.

In the Kiev Special Military District, this, in my opinion, was lacking.

Even during the district field trip, I talked with some comrades from higher command staff. These were generals I. I. Fedyuninsky, S. M. Kondrusev, F. V. Kamkov (commanders of the rifle, mechanized and cavalry corps). They, like me, formed the opinion that we were on the eve of a war with Nazi Germany. Once I spent the night in Kovel with Ivan Ivanovich Fedyuninsky. He was hospitable owner.

The conversation is all about the same: a lot of carelessness. From the headquarters of the district, for example, an order followed, the expediency of which was difficult to explain in that alarming situation. The troops were ordered to send artillery to the ranges located in the border zone. Our corps managed to defend its artillery. We proved that we can work out all the exercises in our place. And it helped us out in the future. Agreed with I. I. Fedyuninsky on cooperation

our

formations, once again figured out what to do so as not to be taken by surprise when they had to go into battle.

Everything was done that was within the limits of our powers and rights, starting with the systematic monitoring of the development of mobilization documents. In particular, they checked the national economic vehicles assigned to the corps. Unfortunately, civil organizations did not pay due attention to this issue. (I will say right away: due to the difficult situation that has developed since June 22 in the border zone, the 9th mechanized corps did not receive a single vehicle from those assigned according to the mobilization plan; by the way, it was announced already at the time the corps went on a military campaign.)

And the most alarming circumstance is that May has expired, June is in full swing, and we have not received combat materiel. Educational equipment was worn out, the motors lived out their life. I had to limit the use of tanks for training purposes for fear that we tankers would be on war without any tanks at all.

On June 21, I conducted an analysis of the command-staff night corps exercise. Having finished his business, he invited the division commanders to go fishing at dawn at the weekend. But in the evening, someone from our headquarters was informed through the line of the border troops that a corporal of the German army, a Pole by nationality, from Poznan had defected to the outpost, and claims: on June 22, the Germans will attack the Soviet Union.

I decided to cancel my fishing trip. I phoned the division commanders and shared with them the message received from the border. We also talked at the headquarters of the corps. Decided to keep everything

ready..."

Why on earth would they report a German defector to a mechanized corps located far enough from the border "along the line of the border troops" (!)? It is more correct to assume that the warning came through the KOVO headquarters, especially since, as is known from Zhukov's memoirs, the people's commissar of defense was also aware of this defector. Probably, in this case, Rokossovsky should have emphasized that all measures to increase the combat readiness of the troops

He undertook independently, without an order from the district headquarters. However, in this respect permissible doubt.

There is a rather convincing version according to which Stalin was really going to attack

Hitler in the summer of 1941. And the main blow was supposed to be applied just in the southwestern direction. Even on the plan for the strategic deployment of the Red Army of March 11, 1941, in the section devoted to the southwestern direction, Deputy Chief of the General Staff N.F. Vatutin, clearly from the words of Stalin, imposed a resolution: "The offensive will begin on 12.06." However, by June 12, they did not have time to concentrate troops, equipment and the necessary supplies, and the offensive was postponed to July. As part of the preparations for this offensive, on May 15, the General Staff prepared a plan for a preventive strike, providing for the main and only strike by the Southwestern Front, followed by the encirclement of the main forces of the Wehrmacht in Poland (on the remaining fronts, defensive operations were supposed to be carried out). On June 4, 1941, the Politburo of the Central Committee decided to form the 238th Rifle Division of the Red Army by July 1, 1941 from Poles and people who know the Polish language. This division was to

become

the prototype of the future Polish Army, completely controlled by the USSR, and to ensure the predominance of the Bolsheviks in post-war Poland. It is possible that just in connection with the upcoming attack on Germany, the artillery of the KOVO formations was transferred to the border. Rokossovsky managed to defend his artillery, which greatly helped the 9th mechanized corps in the first

DAYS OF WAR.

By the beginning of World War II, the personnel of the 9th mechanized corps was

almost completely equipped, tanks and vehicles had only a third of the norm - a few

over three hundred cars. The material part was badly worn out. In a fragment of his memoirs, published only during the years of perestroika, the marshal testified:

"Quite carefully studying the nature of the actions of the German troops in operations in Poland and in

France, I could not figure out what the plan of action of our troops in this situation in the event of a German attack.

Judging by the concentration of our aviation on advanced airfields and the location of warehouses of central importance in the front line, this was like preparing a jump forward, and the disposition of troops and the measures taken by the troops did not correspond to this.

Even when the Germans began to concentrate their troops near our border, transferring them from the west, which the General Staff and the KOVO command could not have been unaware of, no changes occurred in our country. An atmosphere of incomprehensible calmness continued to prevail in the troops of the district ...

It became known that the KOVO headquarters began redeployment from Kyiv to Ternopil. What caused this, no one informed

us. In general, I must repeat once again, there was some kind of calm and

no information came from above. Our press and radio also broadcast only soothing messages.

In any case, if there was any plan, it clearly did not correspond to the situation that had developed by the beginning of the war, which led to the heavy defeat of our troops in the initial period of the war.

Rokossovsky correctly guessed that the Soviet troops were preparing to jump forward, and they did not expect a German attack, despite the concentration of German troops near the border. Stalin, Timoshenko and Zhukov believed that the German troops were pulled here only to repel a possible

Soviet strike, which the Germans, they say, are expecting in the event that a German landing on the British Isles follows. The Wehrmacht will strike the main blow against England. Goebbels' article "Crete as an example", which appeared in the German officialdom "Völkischer Beobachter" on June 13, 1941, convinced of this. The article made a transparent hint that the recent capture of Crete by German paratroopers was only a rehearsal for a much larger landing on the British Isles. The issue was confiscated by military censors, but in such a way that part of the circulation reached neutral countries and foreign embassies located in Berlin. It was a carefully prepared disinformation operation designed to cover the transfer to

Soviet

the borders of the main part of the tank and motorized divisions and the main forces of the Luftwaffe. Answer

On the Goebbels article, a well-known TASS statement dated June 14 became known, where rumors about a possible war between the USSR and Germany were refuted and it was stated that both countries strictly observe the Non-Aggression Pact. When Hitler and Goebbels read the TASS Statement, they concluded that Stalin did not expect a German attack anytime soon. They did not know that Goebbels' article was the reason for the acceleration of the preparations for the Soviet attack. Stalin sought to strike before the German troops landed in England, because he was afraid that then they would have time to crush the British resistance, and then, having restrained the Soviet offensive through elastic defense, they would fall upon the Red Army with all their might.

Rokossovsky knew nothing about this. The plan of attack on Germany from considerations

secrecy was not brought not only to the commanders of the corps, but even to the commanders of the armies and border military districts. In all likelihood, besides Stalin, only People's Commissar for Defense Timoshenko, Chief of the General Staff Zhukov, some high-ranking officers of the General Staff, as well as some members of the Politburo, including Molotov, Voroshilov and Beria, knew about this plan. But 22

June, this plan became the property of history, and did not begin to be implemented.

Chapter Five
FIRE SUMMER OF 1941

At 4 am on June 22, 1941, Rokossovsky was awakened by a messenger from the corps headquarters. He brought a telephone message with an order from the Deputy Chief of the Operations Department of the 5th Army

Headquarters to immediately open a special secret operational package. According to the existing situation, this could only be done by order of the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars or the people's commissar of defense. But connections was neither with Moscow, nor with Kiev. Rokossovsky took responsibility and opened the package.

The directive of the General Staff contained in it ordered to immediately put the corps on combat readiness and march in the direction of Rovno - Lutsk - Kovel. To replenish food supplies, ammunition and other ammunition, Rokossovsky ordered to open the central warehouses located nearby, again taking responsibility. He also requisitioned civilian vehicles against receipt for the transfer to a given area of a motorized rifle division. Subsequently, the marshal said that on the day the war began, he wrote more receipts than for all

previous years.

Rokossovsky recalled:

“Having made a 50-kilometer transition on the first day, the main part of the corps, which was infantry, was completely exhausted and lost all combat effectiveness. We did not take into account the fact that the infantry, deprived of any kind of transport, is forced to carry, in addition to personal equipment, light and heavy machine guns, disks and belts for them, 50-mm and 82-mm

mortars and ammunition. This circumstance forced the reduction of infantry crossings to 30-35 km, which led to a slowdown and advancement of the 35th and 20th so-called

tank

divisions. The motorized rifle division, which had the opportunity to take its infantry, albeit with a large overload, onto vehicles and tanks, proceeded normally to its destination, to

At the end of the day, breaking away 50 km ahead, it reached the Rivne region.

In his memoirs, Konstantin Konstantinovich admitted: "I forbade giving commanders and sergeants a protective color of buttonholes and insignia. The commander must stand out sharply in battle formations. The soldiers must see him. And he himself must feel that his behavior is being watched, equal to him. True, in this way the commanders became a more visible target for German snipers and machine gunners.

According to Rokossovsky, "the misfortune was that the corps was only called

mechanized. I looked with bitterness on the campaign at our old T-26, BT-5 and a few BT-7s, realizing that they would not withstand long-term hostilities. Not to mention the fact that we had no more than a third of these tanks in the state.

The infantry of both tank divisions did not have vehicles, and since it was listed as motorized, it did not have any

wagons, no horses. But, despite the difficulties, we did everything to gather our forces into a fighting fist and repulse the enemy, honestly fulfill our soldier's duty.

Already on the first day, such qualities of Rokossovsky as decisiveness and independence appeared. He was not afraid to take responsibility for himself and did everything possible so that the corps was brought into action as soon as possible.

The then head of the operations department of the headquarters of the Southwestern Front, I. Kh. Bagramyan, recalled:

"The third day of the war was coming to an end. An increasingly alarming situation was developing on the Southwestern Front. The threat, in particular, hung over Lutsk, where the 15th mechanized corps of General I. I. Karpezo needed urgent support, otherwise the enemy's tank wedges could cut and crush it. The units of the 87th and 124th rifle divisions, surrounded by the enemy near Lutsk, were also waiting for help. And when we at the front headquarters were racking our brains on how to help out the Lutsk group, the main forces of the 131st motorized and advanced detachments of the tank divisions of the 9th mechanized corps, commanded by K.K. Rokossovsky, arrived in time. Reading his report about this, we literally could not believe our eyes. How did Konstantin Konstantinovich succeed? After all, his so-called motorized division could only follow ... on foot. It turns out that on the very first day of the war, the decisive and enterprising corps commander, at his own peril and risk, took all the vehicles from the district reserve in Shepetovka - and there were about two hundred of them - put infantry on them and

combined march moved ahead of the corps. The approach of its units to the Lutsk region saved

position. They stopped the enemy tanks that had broken through and provided significant assistance to the formations retreating in a difficult situation.

According to Rokossovsky, still on the way to the front

"We began to notice how, in one place or another, in the thick of bread, strangely dressed people appeared alone, and sometimes in groups, who, at the sight of us, quickly disappeared. Alone of them

were in linen, others in undershirts and military-style trousers or in heavily worn peasant clothes and tattered straw hats. These people, of course, could not but call

suspicious, and therefore, having suspended the movement of the headquarters, I ordered to catch those who were hiding

And

find out who they are. It turned out that these were the first so-called people from the environment, who belonged to various military units. Among those caught, and there were a decent number of them, two Red Army men from the platoon sent to equip our command post were found.

From their story it turned out that the platoon, following to the indicated place, ran into a group of German tanks, motorcyclists and infantry in vehicles, was suddenly attacked and surrounded. Several fighters managed to escape, while the rest allegedly died.

Other respondents tried in every possible way to prove that their units were defeated and died, but they miraculously escaped and, assuming that they were deep behind enemy lines, decided, fearing capture, to change clothes and try to break through to their troops.

Well, their masquerade was explained simply. Those who managed to exchange their uniforms for civilian clothes with the local population put them on, those who did not succeed remained in underwear alone. Fear overcame common sense, since primitive

cunning did not save from captivity, because the linen had military marks on it, and the enemy was not so naive as not to notice them.

Subsequently, we saw the corpses of the executed in this form - in linen (the Germans shot them as partisans, who were suspected of any Red Army soldiers dressed in civilian clothes. However, they shot the participants in this primitive, fear-induced masquerade and their own. - B.S.).

Singing the heroic behavior and exploits of troops, units and individuals in battles with the enemy, which were of a massive nature, one cannot pass over in silence and there were cases of panic, shameful flight, desertion from the battlefield and on the way to the front, self-mutilation and even

suicides for fear of
responsibility for their behavior in battle ...

In order to search for and establish contact with the 19th and 22nd MKs, parts of which should be somewhere ahead or away from us, reconnaissance groups led by officers of the corps headquarters were sent out in several directions. One of these groups left the chief of staff of the corps. Returning, he reported that he had succeeded for a short time in contact with the chief of staff of the front, General

M. A. Purkaev. No information about the situation at the front was reported, from which it followed that the chief of staff of the front himself, apparently, did not know anything at that time. This is understandable, since communication with the troops was broken by the enemy from the first hour of the attack. To destroy wired communications, he used small air bombs, which had a device in the form of a cross on a rod. He touched the wires, they instantly exploded. "Bombs" dropped in batches

with
aircraft. In addition, the wires were also destroyed by saboteurs trained for this purpose, possibly even before the start of the war.

Continuing to move to the area of concentration, we repeatedly observed the bombing by German aircraft of columns moving along the Lutsk-Rovno highway, both military units and the civilian population evacuated to the east. The erratic movement of those rushing one by one

And
groups of cars looked more like a stampede than an organized evacuation. Repeatedly, squads had to be sent to restore order and detain servicemen who tried, under various pretexts (unfounded), to get away from the front.

The 9th mechanized corps first launched an unsuccessful counterattack on Ilyniv, and then managed to delay the advance of two German tank and one motorized divisions to the Lutsk-Rovno highway, but it itself suffered significant losses, including in a repeated counterattack on the enemy units that had broken through in the Rovno area. Of the more than 300 tanks it had at the start of the war, on July 7 a little more than half remained in service - 164 tanks. And by July 15, at the moment when Rokossovsky stopped commanding the corps, only 32 tanks remained in service, including seven BTs and 25 T-26s. Many tanks failed for technical reasons - from

behind
depletion of motor resources, weakness of repair and evacuation services, as well as due to the inability of the crews to eliminate even minor breakdowns and the low level of training of driver mechanics who made numerous accidents. Considerable losses were suffered by the corps from the enemy

aviation. In this respect, it did not differ from other mechanized corps of the Red Army in That period. The level of training of tankers and especially tank commanders left much to be desired a lot of the best.

On July 7, after retreating to the line of the old fortified areas, the 9th Corps was withdrawn to the front reserve. By July 9, no more than 10 thousand fighters remained in the corps, no more than a third of its original strength, and 30-35 tanks. Characteristically, during the two days of the march, the number of combat-ready tanks decreased by more than 130 vehicles, that is, by almost the same amount as during the period of intense hostilities. I had to pay for the lack of proper maintenance of equipment.

At the same time, the results of the combat operations of the 9th mechanized corps were better when compared with the results of other mechanized corps of the Southwestern Front. For example, the most powerful of them, the 4th mechanized corps under the command of Major General A. A. Vlasov, was located in the Lvov region and had 979 tanks by the beginning of the war, including 414 T-34s and KVs, which are not in the Rokossovsky corps. there was not a single thing.

Nevertheless, by July 7, only 126 tanks remained in the 4th mechanized corps.

In general, the results of the border battle turned out to be deplorable for the Southwestern Front. Before the start of the battle, his troops had a significant superiority over the 6th and 17th German armies and the 1st Panzer Group that opposed them. All tanks in the troops of the front there were

4201. Some of the newest T-34s and KVs were 761, which exceeded the total number of tanks in Army Group South - 750.

Against 31 divisions of Army Group South, the South-Western Front could field 58 divisions. But Kirponos and the Chief of the General Staff Zhukov, who was at the headquarters of the front, incorrectly determined the direction of the main attack of the enemy, and as a result, the counterattacks of the mechanized corps, including the Rokossovsky corps, fell almost from scratch.

By June 30, the Southwestern Front had irretrievably lost 2,648 tanks—nearly two-thirds of what it had at the start of the war. And

by July 9, the losses increased to 3464 vehicles, and there were almost no tanks left in the ranks of the Soviet side. The German

tank divisions of Army Group South, although they suffered

losses, but fully retained combat capability.

In these battles, Rokossovsky sometimes personally had to restore order, not

stopping before the threat of the
use of weapons. He recalled how in the Klevan region

"We gathered a lot of unfortunate warriors, among whom there were many officers. Most of these
people had no weapons. To our shame, all of them, including the officers, were arguing the insignia.

In one of these groups, an elderly man sitting under a pine tree, who in his appearance and demeanor did not at all resemble a soldier,
caught
my attention. A young nurse sat next to him. Turning to those sitting, and there were at least a hundred of them, I ordered the officers to
come up to me.
Nobody moved. Raising my voice, I repeated the order a second, third time. Silence again in response

and immobility. Then, going up to the elderly "encirclement", he ordered him to get up. Then,
naming
commander, asked what rank he was. The word "colonel" he squeezed out of himself
so
indifferently and at the same time with such a brazen challenge that his appearance and tone literally blew
me away. Pulling
out a pistol, I was ready to shoot him right there, on the spot. Apathy and bravado instantly subsided from the
colonel. Realizing
how this could end, he fell to his knees and began to beg for mercy, swearing that he would atone for his
shame with blood. Of
course, the scene is not pleasant, but it just so happened.

The colonel was instructed to gather all his kind by morning, form a team of them and report to me
personally
on the morning of June 26th. The order was carried out. The assembled team included

over 500 people. All of them were used to replenish losses in motorized
parts
corps."

In the days of the border battle, Rokossovsky wrote to his wife and daughter, about whose whereabouts after
the
evacuation of the families of the command staff from Novograd-Volynsky still did not know anything:

"Dear Lulu and dear Adusya! I don't know how I can get in touch with you. I am healthy, alert, and no force can take me. I'm worried
about you.
How do you live there? Climb somewhere in a small town away from big cities, it will be calmer there. Goodbye, my dear, dear,
unforgettable. Take
care of yourself and don't worry too much about me. See you again and live a happy life. I kiss you tightly, Kostya, who loves you infinitely.
July 8, 1941."

About what happened to the Rokossovsky family after the start of the war, the grandson of Marshal

Konstantin

Vilyevich told from the words of his mother:

"The headquarters of the corps, commanded by Rokossovsky, was located in a small border town. On June 22, my mother got up very early and ran to the House of Culture, from where a car with amateur performances was supposed to leave. They were going to give a concert in one of the parts. Halfway through, my mother met my grandfather, who was walking quickly towards the house. He ordered her to immediately return home, said: "War, daughter." A few minutes later he left for the division, and until the autumn they did not know where he was and what happened to him. Grandfather's adjutant put my mother and grandmother in Kyiv on a train that was supposed to take them to Moscow to relatives. But at the entrance to the capital, the train was turned back and all passengers were sent for evacuation to Kazakhstan. From there they decided to go to their grandmother's brother in Novosibirsk. By the time grandpa's letter found them,

they lived in

very cramped conditions - grandmother and mother, grandmother's sisters and brother, their children - all in one room. When, finally, it became known that the grandmother was the wife of that very Rokossovsky, who smashed the Germans near Moscow, they were given a small apartment ...

In Novosibirsk, my grandmother worked at the military registration and enlistment office - she was looking for people who could work instead of those who went to the front. Mom was still in school.

After returning from the evacuation, my grandmother began to work in the council of wives of front-line soldiers at the Soviet district military registration and enlistment office in Moscow. They collected parcels for front-line soldiers, organized concerts for the wounded who were being treated in Moscow hospitals.

Mom was then seventeen years old, and, like many young girls, she wanted to go to the front. To keep her, my grandmother wrote to my grandfather, who demanded that my mother first learn military science. Then she went to the courses of radio operators at the Central Headquarters of the Partisan

movement. Graduates of these courses were prepared for being thrown behind enemy lines. It is clear that when my mother graduated from these courses in 1943, such a fate for her only daughter did not please Rokossovsky. While most of her fellow students were indeed sent to the partisans or became

as radio operators with sabotage groups, my mother, despite her desperate attempts to join her friends, was left in Moscow at the Central Headquarters. She was terribly worried, quarreled with her grandfather, and in

in the end, he had to take her to the front, attach her to a mobile radio station. Mom was a fighting girl, she had a masculine character, and although she promised not to endanger herself, she didn't really try to keep her word. Grandfather was terribly worried, especially when the situation in my mother's area escalated.

But back to 1941. On July 14, Rokossovsky was recalled from the Southwestern Front to Moscow, from where he was sent to Smolensk, where a critical situation developed. Here are his impressions of

actions of the commander of the Southwestern Front in the first weeks of the war. On the morning of 15 July he

"I introduced myself to the front commander, Colonel-General M.P. Kirponos. I was extremely surprised by his sharply conspicuous confusion. Seeing, apparently, my surprise, he had tried calm down, but he failed. He either absent-mindedly listened to my concise information about the situation in the sector of the 5th Army and the corps, then often interrupted, running up to the window with exclamations: "What is the air defense doing? .. Planes fly, and no one shoots them down ... Disgrace!" He immediately ordered to give an order to increase the activity of air defense and to call her chief to him. Yes, it was confusion, because in the current situation at that time, another front commander, in my opinion, would not have been up to air defense.

True, he tried to solve more important issues. So, several times by phone he gave orders to the headquarters to transfer orders to someone about decisive counterattacks. But it all sounded uncertain, fussy, insubstantial. When ordering to throw one or two divisions into battle, the commander was not even interested in whether these formations could

counterattack, did not explain the specific purpose of their use. It seemed that he either did not know the situation, or did not want to know it.

In those minutes, I finally came to the conclusion that such a voluminous, complex and responsible duty is not up to this person, and woe to the troops entrusted to him. With such a mood, I left the headquarters of the South-Western Front, heading for Moscow. I first learned that a very difficult situation had also developed on the Western Front: the Germans were approaching Smolensk. Knowing the commander of the Western Front, General D. G. Pavlov, long before the start of the war (in 1930 he was a regiment commander in the division I commanded), I could conclude in advance that he was a pair of Kirponos, if not even weaker than him.

On the way, I involuntarily began to think about what had happened, that we had suffered such a heavy defeat in the initial period of the war.

Of course, it could be assumed that the enemy, having forestalled us in concentrating and deploying his main forces near the borders, would push our covering troops to some distance. But somewhere, in the depths, according to the real calculations of the General Staff, our main forces should

have time to deploy. They were supposed to meet the enemy in an organized manner and deliver a counterstrike to him. Why didn't this happen?

I had to hear and read in many works of a military nature published in our country

V

post-October period, sharp criticism of the Russian generals, including the Russian General Staff, who were accused of stupidity, mediocrity,

tyranny, etc. But,

remembering

the beginning of the First World War and studying the plan of the Russian General Staff, drawn up before it began, I was convinced of the opposite.

That plan was drawn up precisely taking into account all the real features that could have one or another effect.

influence on the terms of readiness, concentration and deployment of the main forces. It provided for the comparative possibilities of Russia and Germany to quickly

mobilize and concentrate

on

border their main forces. This was taken into account when determining the line of deployment and his

distance from the border. In accordance with this, the forces and composition of the troops covering the deployment were also determined. At that time, the line of

deployment was mainly the line of border fortresses. This is the plan I understood.

What plan was developed and presented to the government by our General Staff? Yes and did he

at all?"

Konstantin Konstantinovich was clearly not happy with the fact that his corps had to participate in poorly prepared and hastily carried out counterattacks, doomed

to failure in advance. He was outraged that both the General Staff, that is, Zhukov, and the command of the Southwestern Front acted against all laws of tactics and

operational art, just to report to

Stalin about

measures taken. Rokossovsky quite rightly believed that before it was necessary

find out the situation, then create strike groups from mechanized corps and strike with powerful tank fists at the most vulnerable places of the enemy, not stopping before losing part of the territory.

But the main reasons for the defeat of the South-Western Front were still not insufficient staffing of the mechanized corps. Even in this form, they significantly outnumbered the German tank formations that opposed them in terms of the number of tanks. The main reasons lay in the lower level of personnel training and management organization in

Soviet

armored formations, as well as in the air supremacy of German aviation, which was especially effective against tanks during the march, when broken vehicles often

stopped the movement of the entire column. The Soviet mechanized corps, which had more than a thousand tanks in the state, were too bulky, given that the commanders had too

few radio stations. In addition, the drivers, and the rest of the tankers, were poorly trained, they were not able to either observe march discipline or quickly fix

breakdowns. As a result, the mechanized corps suffered the main losses not in battles, but during marches.

It remains to be added that on July 23, 1941, Rokossovsky was awarded the fourth Order of the Red Banner for his skillful leadership of the combat operations of the 9th Mechanized Corps.

In the cited fragment of the memoirs, Konstantin Konstantinovich extremely lowly assessed the abilities of the commanders of the two main Soviet fronts

at the beginning of the war - M.P. Kirponos and D.G. Pavlov. It was felt that he, as it were, tried on what was happening for himself and came to the conclusion that if he had been at the head of one of the two fronts, the outcome of the border battles would not have been so catastrophic for the Soviet side.

Rokossovsky probably once again regretted that the bulk of the top-level commanders were destroyed during the repressions, and those who replaced them had almost

no experience in commanding corps and armies. After all, even he, Rokossovsky, who spent two and a half years in prison, by the beginning of the war in general

difficulties about

For two and a half years he served as a corps commander. And the same Kirponos, before the way

to become commander first of the Leningrad, and then the Kyiv military district, managed to command the corps for only two months. And Pavlov, who became the commander of the Belarusian military

district after the post of head of the Armored Directorate of the Red Army, he never commanded not only a corps, but even a division. It is not surprising that

such inexperienced commanders were confused after a surprise attack by the enemy and could not effectively

lead the armies of their fronts.

Rokossovsky, assessing the actions of the Red Army in the first months of the war, wrote: "To everyone memorable actions of Russian troops under the command of such commanders as Barclay de Tolly and Kutuzov in 1812. But both one and the other could also order the troops to "stand to the death" (which was especially instilled in us and what some generals began to boast about!). But they did not do this, and not because they doubted the stamina of the troops entrusted to them. No, not because. They were confident in people. The thing is that they wisely took into account the inequality of the parties and understood: to die, if necessary, then really. The main thing is to equalize forces and create a more profitable

position... During the first days of the Great Patriotic War, it was determined that the border battle us lost. It seemed possible to stop the enemy only somewhere in the depths, concentrating the necessary forces for this by withdrawing formations that had retained their combat capability or were still

those who did not participate in the battle, as well as those who approached from the depths according to the deployment plan. The troops that got involved in the battle with the advancing enemy should have been given the task of using mobile defenses to retreat under pressure from the enemy from line to line, thereby slowing down his advance. Such a decision would be in line with the prevailing situation at the front. And if it had been adopted by the General Staff and front commanders, then the war would have proceeded completely differently. And we would have avoided those huge losses, human, material, which they suffered in the initial period of fascist aggression.

It was the mobile, elastic defense, which made it possible to save soldiers' lives, that the marshal used when there were objective prerequisites for such a decision. A note was preserved in his archive: "There can be no talk of a long-term defense in one place. hitting, chasing, stop and strike again ... "He tried to fight, using the same tactics as the Germans and the Western allies. But it didn't always work out.

As early as July 11, Rokossovsky was appointed commander of the 4th Army instead of A. A. Korobkov, who was arrested and subsequently shot. From him, as well as from D. G. Pavlov and some other generals, they made a scapegoat for the defeats of the first days of the war. Rokossovsky arrived at the headquarters of the Western Front on July 17, but due to the deteriorating situation in the Smolensk region, he was left to organize defense in the Yartsevo area.

In Moscow, Rokossovsky learned that a void had "formed" near Yartsevo as a result of a large airborne landing by the enemy. In fact, there was no landing, but there was a breakthrough of German tanks and motorized infantry. But the Soviet military leaders preferred to talk about landings, so as not to admit to their higher authorities that the enemy had managed to break through the positions of their troops.

The Rokossovsky group was supposed to cover the direction to Vyazma and help the 16th and 20th armies break out of the Smolensk pocket. According to the marshal, his group was replenished

"due to the fighters accumulated at the assembly point, lagging behind their units, leaving the encirclement. Unfortunately, the last, or rather most of them, came without weapons, and us with great difficulty it was possible to arm them. Moreover, this had to be done during the fighting, not ceased day and night. People got to know each other, one might say, immediately in a hot business.

In those days, the turnover of personnel was enormous.

In continuous battles with an ever-increasing enemy in the Yartsevo direction, it was a lot of cases of manifestation of heroism both on the part of individuals (Red Army men, officers), and units and units.

To my great regret, about which I have no right to remain silent, there were many facts of manifestations of cowardice, alarmism, desertion and self-mutilation by military personnel in order to evade battle.

At first, the so-called "left-handers" appeared, shooting themselves through the palm of their left hand or shooting off a finger, several fingers on it. When attention was paid to this, they

"right handers" appeared, doing the same thing, but with the right hand.

There was self-mutilation by conspiracy: two mutually shot through each other's hands.

At the same time, a law was passed providing for the application of capital punishment (execution) for desertion,

evasion of battle, "crossbow", disobedience to the chief in a combat situation. The interests of the Motherland were above all, and in their name the application of the most severe measures was required, and any indulgence for self-seekers it became not only superfluous, but also harmful.

As you can easily see, despite the gentleness of character, Rokossovsky without hesitation ordered to shoot deserters and "self-shooters".

On the night of July 17, by order of the Stavka, Konstantin Konstantinovich arrived in the Yartsevo area. Soon he subjugated the 38th Rifle Division of Colonel M. G. Kirillov, who lost contact with the headquarters of the 19th Army. In reality, this was not the entire division, but only its headquarters, reconnaissance battalion, the 48th Infantry

Regiment, one battalion of the 29th Infantry Regiment and special units. In addition, the 101st Panzer Division of Colonel G. M. Mikhailov arrived from the reserve with 87 tanks, including seven KVs. Rokossovsky was also subordinated to the 69th motorized division of Colonel P.N. Domrachev, which on July 18 was reorganized into the 107th tank division and sent to the front of the Reserve armies, who fought near Yelnya. The headquarters of the Rokossovsky group was headed by Lieutenant Colonel S.P. Tarasov, the commander of the artillery of the 19th Army, Major General I.P. Camera became chief

group artillery. Then, the group of General Rokossovsky included a combined detachment of Colonel A.I. Lizyukov from two badly battered regiments with fifteen tanks, defending the crossings on the Dnieper in the rear of the 16th and 20th armies, as well as the remnants of the 7th mechanized corps, headquarters which, headed by Colonel Mikhail Sergeevich Malinin, from August 1 became the headquarters of the Rokossovsky group. The former chief of artillery of the 7th mechanized corps, Major General Vasily Ivanovich Kazakov, became the head of the artillery of the group. With them, then Rokossovsky fought almost the entire war. Then a battalion of Moscow communists was added to the group. They were opposed by the German 7th Panzer Division, which captured Yartsevo and crossed the Vop River.

Rokossovsky stated in his memoirs that

"Our activity, apparently, puzzled the enemy command. It met with resistance where it did not expect to meet it; I saw that our units were not only fighting back, but also advancing (albeit not always successfully). All this gave the enemy an exaggerated idea of our

forces on this frontier, and he did not take advantage of his vast superiority.

In reality, the Germans no longer had any superiority here. airborne assault,

I repeat, it was generally pure fantasy, designed to hide the fact of a breakthrough of the front. According to the testimony of the former commander of the 3rd Panzer Group Herman Goth, "in order to cover the rear of the troops holding the encirclement ring in the Smolensk region from enemy attacks from the north and east, only part of the forces of the 7th Panzer Division operating west of Yartsevo were initially allocated, and 20 -I Panzer Division, which approached the settlement of Ustye on the Vop River. Same

Hoth wrote to Field Marshal Fyodor von Bock, Commander of Army Group Center, between 22 and 26 July: "Tank losses are currently about 60%." So even if the entire 7th Panzer Division had concentrated near Yartsev by that time, it should have had fewer tanks than Mikhailov's 101st Panzer Division and Lizyukov's group. In addition, Rokossovsky had a certain number of KV and T-34 tanks, which the Germans had no equal at that time.

Marshal V.I. Kazakov recalled:

"My first meeting with K.K. Rokossovsky took place late at night on July 22, 1941, when the headquarters of the 7th mechanized corps, of which I was the chief of artillery, received an order to become subordinate to Rokossovsky and form the headquarters of the group of troops that he then commanded.

Having strayed a lot through the surrounding forests in the Yartsevo region, we finally found our new commander in the location of the 58th Infantry Division. It cannot be said that Rokossovsky cared very much about his comforts. We found him sleeping in our ZIS-101 passenger car.

The first meeting with Rokossovsky made a very strong impression on us. In contrast to some military leaders, in whom one could observe nervousness, some confusion and even uncertainty in their actions, Rokossovsky, despite a very difficult and tense situation, was restrained, balanced, and everything he spoke about sounded firm, although he and did not raise his voice. He even talked a little thoughtfully about the situation that had arisen, but his conclusions were clear, definite, and logically irrefutable. In such a commander you can

was to believe, and this first impression did not deceive us. The appearance of Konstantin Konstantinovich was also remarkable and far from ordinary: tall, slender and fit, he immediately won over with an open smile and soft speech.

The Rokossovsky group did not last long, but we managed to get to know each other quite closely. IN

August K.K. Rokossovsky was appointed commander of the 16th Army and achieved appointments for

the post of chief of staff of the army, Colonel M. S. Malinin (former chief of staff of the 7th mechanized corps), and for the post of chief of artillery of the army -

me. From then on, the three of us were inseparable until November 1944.

From the very first days of the military operations of the army, we had the opportunity more than once to make sure that that our

the commander is a remarkable person. In those difficult months for us, K.K. Rokossovsky more than once found himself in a critical situation and had to make decisions in an extremely difficult

And

confusing environment. And each time we had the opportunity to see how cool and unperturbed this man was, marveling at his self-control. These qualities are beneficial influenced

the entire staff of the headquarters, creating in it an atmosphere of confidence in the correctness of all actions, which we especially needed in the most difficult months of severe trials.

Konstantin Konstantinovich recalled:

"According to intelligence and a survey of prisoners captured in the battles for Yartsevo, it became known that what is being prepared

a new offensive with the goal of cutting off the possible withdrawal of the 16th and 20th armies at all costs. To this end, the opposing side intended to use the forces

of the 7th and 20th Panzer Divisions to strike at the defense of our troops in the Yartsevo area.

This information helped us to take appropriate countermeasures in a timely manner. And the enemy did not succeed. He suffered heavy losses in tanks and

manpower, but could only slightly

push our units in some areas. His offensive in the last days of July bogged down. The decisive role was played by artillery, skillfully organized in this battle by General V. I. Kazakov.

The KV tanks made a stunning impression on the enemy. They withstood the fire of the guns with which the German tanks were armed at that time. But the cars that returned from the battle did not look good either.

in the best way: dents appeared in the armor, some guns had their barrels pierced. The BT-7 tanks showed themselves well: using their speed, they dispersed

and put to flight the enemy infantry. However, we lost many of these machines - they burned like torches.

In fact, the 20th Panzer Division did not act against the Rokossovsky group.

Rokossovsky failed to defeat the 7th Panzer Division, but on August 1, the troops of his group managed to connect with the remnants of the 16th and 20th armies

breaking through to the east from Smolensk. Rokossovsky described this breakthrough as follows: "Having collected everything we could on the

Yartsev site, we struck. The enemy did not expect him: on the eve he himself advanced, was repulsed and did not assume that we were after

heavy defensive combat capable of moving forward. The element of surprise we and wanted

use. They struck mainly with the forces of the 38th rifle and 101st tank divisions, giving them artillery and tanks, including ten heavy KVs. As a result, our units

captured Yartsevo, crossed Vop and captured very advantageous positions on its western bank, on which they entrenched themselves, repelling all

counterattacks. This was helped by the fact that the defense of the crossings at the end of July was reinforced by units of the 44th Rifle Corps of

Divisional Commander V. A. Yushkevich, where he was also

included

Lizyukov's squad.

On August 8, Rokossovsky was appointed to command the 16th Army, which included units of his group and units of the 16th Army that escaped from the

encirclement. In the battle of Smolensk he acted

Very

competently. From scattered detachments of fighters and commanders retreating without orders, he was able to create a combat-ready group of troops in the

Yartsevo area, which stopped the advance of the Germans with a stubborn defense. It was called that - a group of troops of General Rokossovsky.

With the

arrival of several fresh

divisions Rokossovsky recaptured Yartsevo from the enemy, thereby preventing a complete encirclement

remaining

troops in Smolensk.

He became one of the initiators of the return from the system of rifle cells to the system of trenches. The experience of fighting near Smolensk convinced him of

the need for this. Konstantin Konstantinovich recalled:

"Even at the beginning of the fighting, I was worried why our infantry, being on the defensive, almost did not fire rifles at the advancing enemy. The enemy was

usually repulsed by well-organized artillery fire. Well, what about the infantry? He gave the task to a group of comrades to study the circumstances of the

case and at the same time decided to personally check the defense system of the front line on one of the most

busy areas.

Our charters, which existed before the war, taught us to build defense on the so-called cell basis.

system. It was argued that infantry in cells would suffer fewer losses from enemy fire.

Perhaps, according to theory, this is how it turned out, and most importantly, the line looked very beautiful, everything

admired. But alas! The war showed something else...

So, having reached Xie) one of the cells, I replaced the soldier who was sitting there and was left alone.

The consciousness that somewhere on the right and on the left were also sitting Red Army soldiers, I retained, but I did not see or hear them. The squad leader did not see me, as well as all his subordinates. And the fight continued. Shells and mines burst, bullets and shrapnel whistled. Sometimes bombs were dropped

aircraft.

I, an old soldier who participated in many battles, and even then, I frankly confess, felt very bad in this nest. All the time I was not left by the desire to run out and look, they were

sitting
whether my

comrades in their nests or have already left them, and I was left alone. Well, if the feeling of anxiety did not leave me, then what kind of feeling did it have in a person

who, perhaps, was in battle for the first time! ..

A person always remains a person, and, naturally, especially in moments of danger, he wants to see a comrade next to him and, of course, a commander. For some reason, the people said: in the world and death is red. And the squad leader definitely needs to see his subordinates: whom to cheer up, whom to praise, in a word, influence people and keep them in their hands.

The cell defense system turned out to be unsuitable for war. We discussed in our team and

my observations and thoughts of the officers who were instructed to take a closer look at the infantry on

advanced. Everyone came to the conclusion that it was necessary to immediately liquidate the system of cells and go over to the trenches. On the same day, all

parts of the group were given appropriate instructions. A report was sent to the commander of the Western Front. Marshal Timoshenko, with his usual

decisiveness, agreed with us. Things got easier and easier. And the defense has become stronger. We had old soldiers, junior command personnel from the times of the First World War, officers called up for mobilization. They remembered the trenches and helped everyone quickly learn this simple system."

And how did you see the actions of Rokossovsky's troops from the German side? According to the German historian Werner Haupt,

"in the early days, the encirclement front near Smolensk, of course, was loose. Near Yartsevo, with the front to the east, one 7th Panzer Division stood on the high road leading to Moscow. The 12th Panzer and 20th Infantry (motorized) divisions tried to close the 80-kilometer line between Demidov and Rudnya in the direction of Smolensk and create an encirclement front. On July 16, east of Smolensk, there were also the 18th infantry (motorized), 20th tank divisions and the 900th training brigade. In the city itself, the 29th

infantry
(motorized) division.

Six German divisions fought on July 18 against twelve encircled Russian divisions! ..

Fierce fighting began in the northern section of the encirclement. There, between Yartsevo and Toropets, Soviet troops tried to break through the Vop River. The third tank group was forced to hastily repulse these dangerous attacks with its divisions, and then in a few days hastily transfer all its tank formations in a northeasterly direction.

The length of the front along the river Vop was 50 kilometers. Seven Soviet rifle divisions and one tank brigade almost continuously attacked five German infantry divisions, occupied

river defense. Soviet artillery used here for the first time new rocket launchers, which the German soldiers dubbed "Stalin's organs". These volley launchers

fire could
launch over 320 rockets in 30 seconds...

The initiative completely passed to the Red Army. Despite the previous huge losses, the Soviet command managed to deploy new troops at the front. From 20 July along Total front between Yartsevo in the north and Yelnya in the south, new powerful blows of four armies, supported by 138 aircraft, followed.

In the days of the Smolensk battle, Rokossovsky wrote to his family:

"Dear, dear Lulu and Adusya! I am writing you letter after letter, not sure if you will receive it. All measures taken to search for you. Repeatedly attacked the trail, but, alas, you disappeared again.

How many wanderings and hardships you endured! I am still healthy and cheerful. I miss you and a lot about

I think you. I often see it in my dreams. I believe, I believe that I will see you, I will press you to my chest and firmly, firmly

kiss.

Was in Moscow. For the first time in twenty days, I slept naked in bed for the first time. I took a cold bath - there was no hot water. Well, my dears, that's all for now. Hope we get in touch. Goodbye, I kiss you an infinite number of times, yours and Kostya, who loves you madly. July 27, 1941."

On the same day, the commander of the Western Front, S. K. Timoshenko, reported to the Headquarters: "Yartsevo is firmly held by Rokossovsky."

The 16th Army, commanded by Rokossovsky from August 8, covered the Smolensk-Vyazma highway, along which the most convenient route to Moscow lay. Konstantin Konstantinovich recalled: "The army represented an impressive force: six divisions - the 101st tank colonel

G. M. Mikhailova, 1st Moscow motorized rifle, in command of which he entered colonel

A.I. Lizyukov, 38th Colonel M.G. Kirillov, 152nd Colonel P.N. Chernyshev, 64th Colonel A.S. Gryaznov, 108th Colonel N.I.

Orlov, 27th Tank Brigade F.T. Remizov, heavy artillery battalion and other units. Member of the Military Council of the 16th Army

remained

divisional commissar Alexei Andreevich Lobachev, and M.S. Malinin was appointed chief of staff. The artillery of the army was commanded by BV. I. Kazakov, armored troops

Colonel G.N. Orel. All this close-knit command team, with the exception of A. A. Lobachev, remained with Rokossovsky until the end of 1944.

During the Battle of Smolensk, Rokossovsky first gained all-Union popularity. He recalled: "The capital started talking about us. The reports of the Soviet Information Bureau often mentioned the Yartsevo group of troops, and then the 16th Army.

Delegations of Moscow factories, party and Komsomol organizations began to come to us, there were party workers and politicians, frequent

writers, correspondents, and artists performed in parts. Dear and strong ties!.."

Rokossovsky spoke especially warmly in his memoirs about a member of the military council of the 16th Army:

"I consider it my comradely duty to say a kind word about General Alexei Andreevich Lobachev. A member of the Military Council of the Army and I lived in perfect harmony. He loved the troops, knew the people, and I always got a lot of help from him.

Such was this man that there was a need to associate with him. We lived in the same dugout, later we usually chose a house where we could get a job

together. When, together with other correspondents, Vladimir Stavsky began to visit us

- Same

a strong Bolshevik, an interesting writer, not alien to military affairs - we lived together. There were intimate hours! .. "

In the first months of the war, Rokossovsky showed himself to be an energetic, independent, competent military leader, not afraid to take responsibility for himself. His merits were marked by the fourth Order of the Red Banner (and then the awards were given rather sparingly) and promotion to the post

commander. Rokossovsky's troops, like other parts of the Red Army, were defeated during that period. However, Konstantin Konstantinovich succeeded much more successfully than many others.

Soviet military leaders to organize a retreat, hold their positions and conduct counterattacks. But ahead of Rokossovsky and his army, severe trials awaited.

Chapter Six

BATTLE FOR MOSCOW

The troops of the German Army Group Center on October 2 began the implementation of the Typhoon plan - a general offensive against Moscow. The command of the Western Front and the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command incorrectly determined the most likely direction of an enemy strike, which greatly contributed to the ensuing disaster.

Meanwhile, the Soviet command had all the necessary data in order to draw the correct conclusion about the plans of the enemy. As Russian military historians Mikhail Khodarenok and Boris Nevzorov write,

"at the headquarters of the Western Front, for example, there were fairly accurate information about the enemy grouping. It was found that against the eight divisions of the 30th and 19th armies, the Germans deployed 17 of their divisions. In the bands of other armies, the number of divisions opposing each other was approximately equal. This reconnaissance data directly pointed to the probable direction of the enemy strike. But since the Headquarters believed that the enemy would deal the main blow to Smolensk

Vyazma

in the direction defended by the 16th and 20th armies, the commander of the Western Front, General Ivan Konev, did not dare to defend his point of view before Stalin. He concentrated his main forces

where the situation required it, and where the Commander-in-Chief indicated.

At that time, Konev did not have the ability to foresee the course of events, to counteract them.

unfavorable development. He did not encourage these qualities in his subordinates either. So, on September 27, the defense plan of the 16th Army was submitted to him for approval. In it, Rokossovsky provided for a variant of the actions of his formations in the event of a forced withdrawal. But the young 44-year-old commander of the front troops could not allow even in his thoughts to conduct defense with

possible

withdrawal of the troops entrusted to him. They had to, in his opinion, stand to the death. And Konev immediately orders the commander of the 16th: "Fight hard.

Any concept of mobile defense exclude...

Rework the defense plan accordingly."

Rokossovsky wrote about this in his memoirs:

"In the second half of September, the headquarters carefully developed a plan of action for the army troops on occupied by her

turn. The measures provided for in it provided a decisive rebuff to the enemy. At the same time, there was an option in case, despite all our efforts, the enemy still managed to break through the defenses. This option determined how the troops should retreat, inflicting maximum damage on the enemy and delaying his advance in every possible way. The thoughts that guided us: the enemy is still much stronger than us, more maneuverable, he still holds the initiative, so we need to be ready

and complication.

This plan was presented to the commander of the Western Front, I. S. Konev. He approved the first part of the plan, relating to the defense, and rejected the second part, which provided for the order of forced withdrawal.

Thus, Konstantin Konstantinovich foresaw the possible development of events much more accurately than the command of the Western Front. However, he couldn't do anything. Konev forbade even thinking about a retreat, much less developing plans for a possible withdrawal in advance. However, as we will see later, already in the first days of the battle, Rokossovsky had to leave the location of his 16th army together with the headquarters, and with all his desire he could not organize its withdrawal and breakthrough from the encirclement.

On the eve of the start of the German offensive, Rokossovsky was finally able to establish the address of his family. On September 30, 1941, the headquarters of the 16th Army issued the following certificate: "The bearer of this citizen Rokossovskaya Yulia Petrovna is the wife of the Commander of the 16th Army - Lieutenant General Comrade. Rokossovsky Konstantin Konstantinovich.

Together with her in the mountains. Novosibirsk, on Dobrolyubov Street No. 91, their daughter Ada Konstantinovna Rokossovskaya lives.

Lieutenant General Rokossovsky Konstantin Konstantinovich was awarded four Orders of the Red Banner and the Order of Lenin for military merits.

Based on the existing legal provision, family members of Lieutenant General Rokossovsky enjoy benefits as families of the order-bearer.

The Germans delivered the main blow on the flanks of the Western Front, and not along the Smolensk highway -

Moscow, where the Soviet command was waiting for him. On the site of the 16th Army, the Germans only demonstrated an offensive, and they managed to repel it without much difficulty. But in the afternoon, Rokossovsky received information from the commander of the 19th Army, M.F. Lukin, about intense fighting on the right flank of his army.

On October 3, Rokossovsky decided to conduct reconnaissance in force. The prisoners showed that tank and motorized units appeared in the Yartsevo direction. Rokossovsky strengthened the defense of the Moscow-Smolensk highway and even conducted artillery counter-training with the participation of the Katyusha division. Counter-preparation fell on an empty place, since in reality the Germans were not going to attack here. Rokossovsky noted: "All the next day, the enemy held our defense sector under heavy fire, without undertaking an offensive. Groups

aircraft bombed the positions of the batteries and carried out enhanced reconnaissance of the roads towards Vyazma. On the evening of October 3, Lukin reported that the 244th division had had to turn its front to the north. Rokossovsky sent the 127th tank brigade and the 38th and 214th rifle divisions to help the neighbor.

On October 5, Rokossovsky received an unexpected order:

"To Commander 16 Rokossovsky I immediately order the section of the 16th Army with troops to be transferred to Commander 20 Ershakov. Himself with the command of the army and the necessary means of communication to arrive by forced march no later than the morning of 6.10 to Vyazma.

The 16th army will include in the Vyazma region 50 sd (19A), 73 sd (20A), 112 sd (16A), 38 sd (16A), 229 sd (20A), 147 brigade (reserve 3F), RS division, regiment PTO and regiment ARGC. The task of the army is to delay the enemy's attack on Vyazma, advancing from the south from the area of Spas Demensk, and not

let it pass north of the Putkovo-Krutyte-Drozhdino line, meaning that the grouping created (i.e., the 16th Army) then go on the offensive in the direction of Yuhnov.

Receipt and execution to convey. Konev, Bulganin, Sokolovsky. 5.10.41".

Historian I. N. Smirnov writes:

"The stop line for the Germans, by order of Konev, was appointed on the Utra River, 35 kilometers south of Vyazma, that is, in the zone of the Reserve Front (!). Rokossovsky writes in his memoirs that he allegedly did not know what divisions should expect him in Vyazma upon his arrival there. He's writing:

"... in the evening (October 5) I received a telegram from the headquarters of the Western Front ... with the headquarters of the 16th Army to arrive on October 6 in Vyazma and organize a counterattack in the direction of Yuhnov. It was reported that in the Vyazma region we would receive five rifle divisions with reinforcements. By scripture

Rokossovsky - someone had to give them to him, and he would receive them. In the order, it was quite clearly indicated to him which grouping of five divisions and one tank brigade was in question. Of these, two divisions were from the 16th Army of Rokossovsky himself - the 112th Rifle Division and the 38th Rifle Division. The order also indicated the 50th Rifle Division from the 19th Army, the 73rd Rifle Division and the 229th Rifle Division from the 20th Army, and the 147th Tank Brigade from the reserve of the Western Front. The group itself retained the name of the 16th Army, and Rokossovsky remained its commander. In fact, Rokossovsky was supposed to transfer only the sector of the front occupied by the army, and not the 16th army. This army, in a different composition and in a different place, remained

in his subjugation...

Rokossovsky writes in his memoirs: "... On the morning of October 6, receivers from the 20th Army arrived ... The training camp was short. Our headquarters moved to a new destination, and we all

felt that some terrible events had taken place, and in this alarming moment - no

troops, nor the certainty that we will find troops where they send us. Attempts to contact the front headquarters by radio were unsuccessful. We found ourselves in some kind of emptiness and in a very stupid position.

It was necessary to try to find out the situation ourselves, which was done with the help of reconnaissance in different directions. The picture that they saw when approaching the Dnieper, east of Yartsevo, alerted me. abandoned positions. Not a single person in the trenches. We knew that one of the armies of the Reserve Front was located in the rear behind our army along the Dnieper. Where is she and what is here

happened, it was hard
to guess."

Guessing Rokossovsky, if desired, was not at all difficult. The headquarters of his 16th Army and the headquarters of the 39th

SD (7th bottom) of the Reserve Front were very close - in Dorogobuzh. The headquarters of the 16th Army was in the

eastern part of the city, and the headquarters of the 29th Rifle Division was in Yamshchina on the outskirts of

Dorogobuzh. And the town is small. Much was known at the headquarters of the 29th. On October 3, the 8th Rifle Division (8th

bottom) withdrew from the Dnieper. The 29th Rifle Division occupied its positions, and now, on alarm, on the 5th, it also left them.

Of course, it was also known there what was happening near Yelnya, because the parcel and the 29th Rifle Division were planned

there too. But they canceled it. And that the division - received an order to move to Vyazma - could be found out on the same

day. Although a special department, allocated at that time from the NKVD to the NPO, but under the tutelage of the NKVD, was all

secrets, but the army commander, even from another front, would probably be allowed to inform.

Neither the fronts nor

the commanders themselves wanted or could interact!

From what was written in the memoirs, it seems that Rokossovsky did not read Konev's order. Rather, he pretends that the order

did not contain what was there. Hence, it was as if he did not understand that the Germans were already close to Vyazma and

what task was set for him. But this is in the memoirs - in reality it was different. And the commander writes further:

"The feeling

of isolation was oppressive. The question of what was happening south of the highway was extremely disturbing ...

Lobachev,

having captured several

officers, went ahead. No more than an hour passed, and he returned ... He met Sokolovsky at the crossroads.

There is no one in Kasna (it was bombed back on the 2nd, and the guarantor who delivered the order by plane on October 5

must have told Rokossovsky about it) ... But your task, Sokolovsky said, remains the same

(that is, the one indicated in

Konev's order)... Where are they, those divisions promised (!) in Konev's order? With this thought, I drove to the location of our new

checkpoint. We found it almost ready. The radio operators have earned. The front headquarters was silent ...

Lobachev and I went to the city.

... Rokossovsky's duty at that time was to fulfill the order given and delivered to him by plane, and not to leave those units that were

intended for him in the order. Now, as he himself saw, these units do not have time to approach Vyazma and, abandoned to the

mercy of fate, will be surrounded! And what compaction of the inner ring was he talking about - after dark

the Germans stopped fighting, and the city was occupied only the next day ...

Rokossovsky, the first of the top military leaders, clearly imagined the current situation. If desired, he - "and the cards in hand." Which divisions were to approach, he knew perfectly well. It was possible to return, organize their approach and deploy in battle formation against the two tank divisions that had not yet closed. In addition, the Germans ceased hostilities in connection with

the onset of darkness. Other tank divisions of the Germans had just begun to advance towards Vyazma. Was

the opportunity to influence the actions of the Stavka in an urgent build-up of forces, including the urgent transfer here of the 119th and 5th divisions of the 31st Army. Seven divisions (including the regiments of the 29th Rifle Division) is already a force. Possessing, undoubtedly, the ability to organize military operations in extreme conditions, which was proved in Yartsevo, Rokossovsky could have prevented the German "pincers" from closing. That's when hundreds of thousands of soldiers' lives would have been saved. But this is all from the area - if only. Rokossovsky dissociated himself from all this."

In fact, I. N. Smirnov accuses Rokossovsky of cowardice, that he did everything to, together with his headquarters, be outside the encirclement, and left the encircled troops to their fate. The accusation is serious, but unsubstantiated.

Konev's order was indeed not very clear. It looked more like a good wish, some kind of slogan, and not like a real combat order. It was not spelled out

who and how organizes the dispatch of the mentioned divisions to the Vyazma region, when and how they arrive there, with

indicating milestones and deadlines. The most logical thing would be to entrust the dispatch of these divisions to the headquarters of Rokossovsky, who now had to command them. And at the same time, make sure that the headquarters itself moves towards Vyazma with at least one of these divisions. Then Rokossovsky, having arrived in Vyazma, would have been able to organize the defense of the city and detain the German

tank units

at least for a day or two. And during this time, tens of thousands of fighters and commanders would have managed to get out of the "cauldron". But there was nothing of the kind in Konev's order, and Rokossovsky, even if and conscious the danger of transferring his headquarters to Vyazma in isolation from the troops subordinate to him, he still could not do anything. After all, he was ordered, together with the headquarters, to arrive in Vyazma as soon as possible.

I. S. Konev recalled the events related to the relocation of the headquarters of the 16th Army

near Vyazma,
in his memoirs, published during the life of Rokossovsky:

“At dawn on October 2, the enemy, after strong artillery and aviation preparation, launched an offensive against the troops of the Western and Reserve fronts. Here the main strength the Center group. Simultaneously with the attacks of the front line, the enemy launched strong air strikes against our rear.

The main blow (by the forces of the 3rd Panzer Group and the infantry divisions of the 9th Army) was inflicted by the enemy on in the direction of Kanyutino - Kholm-Zhirkovsky, i.e., at the junction of the 30th and 19th armies. One example will suffice to give an idea of the strength of the enemy's strike: against the four rifle divisions of the 30th Army, the enemy brought 12 divisions into battle, of which three were armored and one motorized, with a total strength of 415 tanks. The troops of the 30th and 19th armies showed great stubbornness and steadfastly held their positions. But the great superiority of the enemy in forces forced us to withdraw.

At the cost of huge losses, the enemy managed to break through our front and by the end of the day on October 2, move 10-15 kilometers deep. As a result of an air strike on the front command post located in Kasna, we had losses, but since all means of communication were hidden underground, and the leading staff of the headquarters were dispersed in advance, command and control of the troops was not disrupted. In the morning, at my order, the forces of the 30th, 19th armies and

part of the forces of the front-line reserve, united in a group under the command of my deputy general I.V. enemy and restore the position. However, the introduction of front-line reserves and strikes by army reserves did not change the situation. Our counterattacks were not successful.

The enemy had a clear numerical superiority over our grouping, which launched a counterattack. True, the 19th Army repulsed all enemy attacks in most of its sector of the front. However, the enemy captured Kholm-Zhirkovsky, rushed to the Dnieper and reached the area south of Buleshov, where the 32nd Army of the Reserve Front was defending.

The enemy struck the second blow in the Spas-Demensky direction against the left wing of the Reserve Front. Troops of the 4th Nazi Panzer Group and the 4th Army, pushing to the north and

to the east, the formations of our 43rd and 33rd armies reached the line Mosalsk - Spas-Demensk - Yelnya. For the Western Front and for the 24th and 43rd armies of the Reserve Front, a very difficult situation developed.

By the morning of October 4, the direction of the enemy's strike was clearly defined: from Spas-Demensk to Vyazma. Thus, there was a threat of large enemy tank groupings entering the Vyazma region in the rear of the troops of the Western Front from the south, from the Spas-Demensk region, and from the north, from the Kholm-Zhirkovsky region.

The 19th, 16th and 20th armies of the Western Front were under the threat of encirclement. The 32nd Army of the Reserve Front also found itself in the same position.

I reported on the HF to I.V. Stalin about the situation on the Western Front, about the breakthrough of the defense in the direction of Kholm-Zhirkovsky and on the sector of the Reserve Front in the area of Spas-Demensk, and also about

the threat of an exit of a large enemy grouping to the rear of the troops of the 19th, 16th and 20th armies of the Western

Front. Stalin listened to me, but did not take any decision. The HF link cut off and the conversation ended. I immediately contacted

the chief of the General Staff, Marshal B. M. Shaposhnikov, via budo, and reported the situation to him. I asked permission to withdraw our troops

front to the Gzhatsky defensive line. Shaposhnikov listened to the report and said that he would report

Headquarters. However, the decision of the Headquarters did not follow that day (unfortunately, I cannot quote this conversation verbatim, since it has not yet been found in the archives of the Ministry of Defense).

The front command made a decision to withdraw troops to the Gzhatsk defensive line, which was then

approved by the Headquarters. In accordance with this, instructions were given to the commanders of the 30th, 19th, 16th, 20th armies on the organization of the withdrawal.

Here I would like to clarify the issue of the situation of the 16th Army, commanded by K.K. Rokossovsky, due to the fact that in the book of V. Sokolov "Invasion"

obvious inaccuracy.

This book contains the following conversation between G.K. Zhukov and K.K. Rokossovsky:

"Now tell me, dear commander, how and why did your army get surrounded? ..

The question jarred Rokossovsky. He shrugged his shoulders and, against his will, crumpled a piece of the map in his hand. "What is this, a mockery?" And he remembered how in October, after leaving through the forests, he

Rokossovsky, together with a member of the Military Council Lobachev, was summoned by the former commander of the front, wanting to take out his anger on someone, met with angry words: 'They went out themselves, but left the army!' It was an unfair reproach that is hard to forget. Indeed, by the time the 16th Army was surrounded in the Dorogobuzh region, he, Rokossovsky, was no longer in command of it ... "

The whole description of how Rokossovsky was reproached by the former commander - that is, I, is not true.

Even before the Vyazma encirclement, the administration and headquarters of the 16th Army of K.K.

Rokossovsky, by my order, were withdrawn to the Vyazma region, with the task of uniting, under the command of Rokossovsky, the reserves approaching from the depths and the groups emerging from the encirclement. The 16th Army was tasked with organizing defense at the Sychevka-Gzhatsk line.

Further, Konev quoted the order to Rokossovsky, already known to us, on the transfer of the headquarters of the 16th Army to Vyazma and continued:

"All measures were taken so that the order reached Rokossovsky in a timely manner and that his headquarters got out of the threat of encirclement in time. To check the execution of this order, I sent Lieutenant Colonel Chernyshev to Rokossovsky's headquarters, who reported by radio that Rokossovsky's order had been received. Chernyshev himself, returning to the headquarters of the front, died somewhere along the way. The memory of this combat officer, who more than once carried out the responsible assignments of the front command, I always keep in my heart.

Simultaneously with the withdrawal of the command of the 16th Army, units of the 50th Infantry Division arrived in the Vyazma region. By my order, this division from the 19th Army was transferred to the Vyazma region in order to prevent the enemy from closing the encirclement. But while the insignificant army vehicles were being assembled, time passed, and, unfortunately, only two rifle regiments and an artillery regiment managed to arrive on time. The remaining parts of this division were cut off by the advancing enemy and also found themselves in the Vyazma encirclement. The divisions listed in the order to Rokossovsky failed to fully reach the designated areas. When entering the Vyazma region, they got involved in battles with motorized units of the enemy and under his blows

superior forces suffered significant losses. But even after that, they continued to fight partly inside the encirclement, partly outside it - at the turn of Sychevka - Vyazma.

I believe that these documentary data are sufficient to refute the fictitious reproaches on my part against Rokossovsky.

But what about the circumstances associated with the relocation of the headquarters of the 16th Army near Vyazma, Rokossovsky himself recalled:

"On the evening of October 5, I received a telegram from the headquarters of the Western Front. It read: immediately transfer the sector with the troops to General F. A. Ershakov, and himself with the headquarters of the 16th Army arrive on October 6 in Vyazma and organize a counterattack in the direction of Yukhnov. It was reported that in the Vyazma region we would receive five rifle divisions with reinforcements.

All this was completely incomprehensible. To the north of us, in particular near General Lukin, the situation was difficult, it is not known what the events were on the left wing of the front and to the south ...

There were comrades Lobachev, Kazakov, Malinin, Orel. For them, as for me, this telegram caused

suspicions. I remember the exclamation of the chief of staff:

- Leave the troops at such a time? Mind unbelievable! I demanded that the order be repeated with a document signed personally by the front commander.

At night, the pilot delivered an order signed by I. S. Konev and a member of the Military Council

N. A. Bulganina.

Doubts disappeared. But there was no clarity."

Instead of five divisions, Rokossovsky had at his disposal in Vyazma, according to Konev,

only one, and that incomplete composition. She could not resist the two German tank divisions that broke into the outskirts of the city.

On the way to Vyazma, the headquarters of the 16th Army met only refugees and scattered groups of retreating Red Army soldiers. Rokossovsky testified: "Having instructed Malinin to search for troops and seek contact with the front or Headquarters, Lobachev and I went to the city.

The head of the garrison, General I.S. Nikitin reported:

- There are no troops in Vyazma, and in the vicinity too. I only have police. There is anxiety in the city, rumors are spreading that German tanks are coming from the south and southeast from Yukhnov.

— Where is the local Soviet and party power? — In the cathedral. All the regional leadership is there.

The cathedral stood on a high hill, rising above Vyazma like an ancient fortress. In his basement, we really found the secretary of the Smolensk Regional Party Committee D. M. Popov, around him

comrades from the Smolensk and Vyazemsky city committees of the party gathered. Here was the head of the political department of the Western Front D. A. Lestev. He waved his hand happily.

"It's all right, comrades. Meet the commander...

Unfortunately, they had to be disappointed. There is a commander, but he has nothing to command. I asked General Nikitin to report to the party leadership all the information he had about the troops and the situation in the Vyazma region. Lestev was extremely surprised.

- How so? he said. - I recently left the headquarters of the front, he is moving to a new place, and I was assured that you have at least five divisions here, which are waiting for the arrival of the headquarters of the sixteenth army ...

This conversation took place in the afternoon of October 6th.

Before I had time to ask Nikitin about reconnaissance and observation of the approaches to the city, the chairman of the Smolensk City Council, A.P. Vakhterov, ran into the basement:

— German tanks in the city!

- Who reported?

— I saw them from the bell tower!

"Aleksey Andreevich, take care, let them prepare the cars," I turned to General Lobachev.

Lestev, Popov, and I quickly climbed the bell tower. We really saw these tanks.

They fired their machine guns at the cars that were coming out of the city.

German tanks entered Vyazma. We had to get out immediately. Vyazmu in this

there
was no time to protect."

Rokossovsky acted absolutely correctly, requesting confirmation of the order in
written

form. He was well aware that in the event of an unfavorable development of events, he could easily be made a scapegoat, accusing him of abandoning
the troops of his

army in the midst of the battle. Konev could disown the verbal order at any moment. And it's no coincidence

What

a written confirmation of the order with Colonel Chernyshev was received only on the night of October 5-6. The fact is that the Headquarters approved
Konev's

decision to withdraw part of the forces of the Western Front only late in the evening of October 5, and the 112th Rifle Division was withdrawn from the
grouping of

troops transferred to Vyazma. But other divisions could not keep up in time. If Rokossovsky had immediately begun to carry out the order, when he
had not yet been

approved by the Headquarters, he could be accused of leaving the troops without permission. But now, when the order was received only on the night of

October 6, Rokossovsky's headquarters would no longer be in Vyazma on the morning of October 6

could.

The commander and his subordinates ended up in Vyazma only in the afternoon of October 6, almost simultaneously with the German tanks.

During the move to

Vyazma, Rokossovsky's headquarters did not have

communications with the divisions transferred to his subordination, and could not organize the defense of the city and prevent the closing of the
enemy ring.

Konev on October 5 was not yet able to correctly assess the scale of the
danger. He

I saw a threat to Vyazma only from the south, from Spas-Demensk, but did not know that the northern group of Germans was also striving for
the city, that it was here that it was

planned to close the encirclement. But if this is not

knew Konev, Rokossovsky, who had no information about
position

at the front of other armies of the Western and Reserve fronts. And there is no way to accuse Konstantin Konstantinovich of cowardice. I. N.
Smirnov suggests

that Rokossovsky could move towards the troops emerging from the encirclement in order to organize their breakthrough. But real

in that

In the event that in the absence of communication with the troops in the "boiler", it would only be that Rokossovsky would subdue one of the
divisions he encountered

and, together with it, would try to break through to the east. In this case, if he were lucky, he would break through to his own people and, as was the case
in

the future, would lead the troops on the Mozhaik line of defense. But during a breakthrough, he could have died or been captured, and then his
military career in the

Great Patriotic War would have been

finished. Even more likely, such a fate would have awaited Rokossovsky if Konev had left Rokossovsky at the head of the former divisions of the 16th Army, which were defending in the Yartsevo area. Then he would have practically no chance to get out of the ring.

We can say that Rokossovsky was lucky to some extent. But there was no way to accuse him of cowardice. The army commander did not arrive in Vyazma on his own, but on the orders of the front commander. When German tanks entered Vyazma, and there was no connection with the front headquarters moving to a new place, Rokossovsky had to decide whether to move west to try to find some of his subordinate divisions, or retreat east, while the German the ring is not fully closed. Konstantin Konstantinovich

understood that a catastrophe had occurred. And he decided to retreat to the east in order to try to create at least some kind of barrier on the way to the capital. After all, at that moment the headquarters of the 16th Army was the only army headquarters of the Western Front that was outside the encirclement. And he was able to subjugate only one of the divisions that were nearby and managed to pass under the still not dense encirclement.

Konstantin Konstantinovich understood that the troops that had escaped encirclement needed how can quickly break away from the enemy and create a defense at a new frontier. The former artillery commander of the 16th Army, Marshal of Artillery V. I. Kazakov testifies:

"Arriving in the indicated area, the army headquarters was located east of Vyazma. We are still not had communications with the headquarters of the front. The divisions that were supposed to come under the control of the 16th Army advanced to the line west of the city. There was no connection with them either.

Then K. K. Rokossovsky and A. A. Lobachev decided to go to Vyazma and there from the city party committee try to contact Moscow by HF. But soon after their arrival in the city appeared

fascist tanks. These were the advanced units of the 3rd and 4th enemy tank groups. tanks

stopped at the square near the city committee. Rokossovsky and Lobachev, having passed the streets occupied by the Nazis, escaped from the city and returned to headquarters.

On October 7, the main enemy forces also approached Vyazma, cutting off our troops located to the west and south-west of the city.

The situation was difficult. Communication with the headquarters of the front and with the troops defending

west of

Vyazma, was lost. Enemy troops operated between the army headquarters and its divisions. K.K. Rokossovsky gathered his closest assistants and announced his decision to send headquarters officers to the troops. They were supposed to make their way through the territory occupied by the Nazis and set the divisions the task of breaking through in the northeast direction. The commander decided to transfer the army headquarters to Tumanovo, located 8-10 kilometers from the highway - between Vyazma and

Gzhatsk.

The officers appointed by the Chief of Staff M. S. Malinin went to look for the

new divisions. The army headquarters, having moved to Tumanovo, remained there until the morning, waiting for reports from the troops. There was still no connection, although Colonel P.Ya. Maksimenko, the chief of communications for the army, did everything possible to establish it. Finally managed to contact the 18th militia division under the command of Major General P. N. Chernyshev. Having received the task, the division began to break through in the direction of Tumanov.

K.K. Rokossovsky ordered to send several groups of scouts in the direction of Gzhatsk and on the highway east of Tumanov.

Approaching the freeway, the scouts ran into enemy submachine gunners. A shootout ensued.

After that, an expanded Council of War was convened. We gathered in a dilapidated dugout in the forest, where some rear units were located before us. It was raining lightly. The cover of the dugout was leaking in some places. It was cold and damp. The rain didn't bode well. We had to move along country and forest roads, which in such weather would very soon become impassable. And this foreshadowed new troubles.

The opinions expressed at the Military Council were different.

The proposal to organize a strong detachment from the personnel of the headquarters and the communications regiment for a

breakthrough along the highway to Gzhatsk was discussed first. Many hoped that we would find the headquarters of the front there.

By the way, a member of the Military Council of the Army A. A. Lobachev, believing that the headquarters of the front is in Gzhatsk,

tried to personally verify this the day before. He went to Gzhatsk in an armored car, bypassing the motorway. But near the city he was fired

from a small-caliber anti-tank gun. Three armor-piercing shells hit the armored car. One of them got under the seat and only miraculously did not

exploded, wrapped in rags.

But back to the meeting of the Military Council. Some suggested that we remain in place, wait for the approach of our divisions from Vyazma, and then begin active operations. The commander calmly listened to each speaker, and it was difficult to understand how he felt about these plans.

Everyone was waiting for what Rokossovsky would say, which of the two proposals he would accept.

Konstantin Konstantinovich rejected the plan to break through to Gzhatsk along the highway, since this did not promise anything but inglorious victims and the defeat of the headquarters: judging by intelligence data, the number of enemy troops on the highway increased every hour. The army commander also considered it impossible to sit still and passively wait for our divisions to approach. In such a confused and rapidly changing environment, this meant hoping for a chance.

Calmly and confidently, Rokossovsky announced his decision, perhaps the only correct one.

V

the created situation. The commander decided to move the headquarters 20-30 kilometers from the highway and bypass Gzhatsk from the north, hoping to get to the location of his own.

Three columns were organized from the personnel of the headquarters and companies of the communications regiment. The central column was headed by K. K. Rokossovsky. Together with him went a member of the Military Council A. A. Lobachev and

Chief of Staff M. S. Malinin. The left column was commanded, if I am not mistaken, by the commander of the communications regiment. I was ordered to command the right column.

We performed on the evening of October 7th. And two or three hours later, reconnaissance of the central column met parts of the 18th division of Major General P. N. Chernyshev, who moved approximately in that same direction that we are. Our forces have multiplied."

In another memoir essay, V. I. Kazakov recalled:

"In the first months of the war, the word "encirclement" was very often used. It was a disgusting, panicky word, not a military term. In this regard, I would like to note with a feeling of special satisfaction that when near Vyazma our headquarters found itself in a difficult

position and

when the enemy surrounded us on almost all sides, I never once heard an officer or soldier say

the word "environment". Complete calm and order, possible in those conditions, reigned in the columns. I am deeply convinced that this is a great merit of K.K.

Rokossovsky, who, in the most difficult

situations did not lose his presence of mind, invariably remained imperturbable and surprisingly cold-blooded.

Konstantin Konstantinovich also possessed other precious qualities that had a huge impact on those around him and of the constancy of which we were

repeatedly convinced during the years of the war and after it ended. Being an unconditionally strict boss, he was never rude to his subordinates, did not

resort to abuse, as was the case with some at the front. Particularly striking in him was the ability to influence the guilty, in no way humiliating them.

human

dignity. For all these invaluable qualities, our commander was truly loved and deeply respected not only in our headquarters, but also in the troops (first the army, and then the front).

Safely leaving Vyazma, Rokossovsky and his headquarters moved to a command post 10 kilometers northeast of

the city. In the village of Tumanovo they were joined by an NKVD cavalry squadron. The headquarters had already been

cut off from the troops of the former 16th Army by the Germans. Rokossovsky decided to make his way to the northeast,

where, as he believed, there were no German troops yet. The commander of the artillery of the Western Front, I.P. Camera, the head of the operational department of the front headquarters, Major General G.K. Malandin, and the head of the political department of the front, divisional commissar D.A. Lestev, joined the headquarters

of the 16th Army. The campaign began on the night of October 8. The group had cars, trucks and several BT-7 tanks.

Combat security and reconnaissance was carried by the NKVD squadron. On the way, Rokossovsky's headquarters met and

subjugated the 18th rifle division of the people's militia. Near Gzhatsk, the group ran into the Germans, losing one of their

tanks. The bridge over the Gzhat was blown up. The group turned north and on the night of October 9 crossed the Gzhat ford.

On October 11, the epic with the exit from the Vyazma encirclement ended. Rokossovsky recalled:

"In the forests north of Uvarovka - forty kilometers from Mozhaishk - it was finally possible contact

front headquarters. We received an order to arrive in the Mozhaishk region.

On the same day, U-2s arrived for me and Lobachev. I gave instructions to Malinin about moving to a new place, and we headed to the planes. Malinin stopped me

for a minute:

- Take with you the order to transfer the site and troops to Yershakov. When asked why this was necessary, he replied: "It may come in handy, you never know ..."

The headquarters of the front was found in a small one-story house. Comrades Voroshilov, Molotov, Konev and Bulganin were waiting for us. Kliment Efremovich immediately asked a question:

- How did you end up near Vyazma with the headquarters, but without the troops of the sixteenth army?

- The front commander said that the units that I have to take are here.

- Strange... I showed
the marshal the ill-fated order signed by the command.

Voroshilov had a stormy conversation with Konev and Bulganin. Then, at his call, General G.K. Zhukov entered the room.

"This is the new commander of the Western Front," Voroshilov said, turning to us, "they
will give you a new task.

After listening to our short report, K. E. Voroshilov expressed gratitude to all of us from
name
government and the High Command and wished him success in repelling the enemy.

Soon I was summoned to G.K. Zhukov. He was calm and stern. In all his appearance, a strong will was guessed. He took on a huge
responsibility.
Indeed, by the time we reached Mozhaisk, there were very few troops in the hands of the commander of the Western Front. And
with these

forces had to delay the enemy's advance on Moscow.

First, G.K. Zhukov ordered us to take the Mozhaisk military sector (October 11). Before we had time to do this, we received a new order - to
go out with the
headquarters and the 18th infantry division of the militia to the Volokolamsk region, subdue everything we can there, and organize
defense in
the strip from the Moscow Sea in the north to Ruza in the south.

On October 14, Rokossovsky arrived in Volokolamsk, and on October 16, the enemy launched an offensive against the left
flank of the 16th Army. By that
time, the 3rd Cavalry Corps of L.M. Dovator had advanced to the area north of Volokolamsk. The corps consisted of two cavalry divisions
- the
50th

General I. A. Pliev and 53rd brigade commander K. S. Melnik. Rokossovsky subordinated the corps to himself. From Solnechnogorsk near Volokolamsk, a combined cadet regiment was transferred to the 16th Army, created on the basis of a military school named after the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR, under the command of Colonel S. I. Mladentsev. On the left flank of the army, the 316th Rifle Division of Major General I.V. Panfilov, who arrived from Kazakhstan, appeared.

It is felt that editors helped Rokossovsky work on his memoirs - otherwise it is difficult to explain some inconsistencies. Describing the situation before the start of the German offensive on Volokolamsk, Konstantin Konstantinovich states: "In every battle, the enemy

used

mainly its overwhelming advantage in tanks. Again, this is what we should have expected. To counter the tanks, they planned to throw all our artillery. But we clearly lacked it. Therefore, a wide maneuver was foreseen in advance with both trajectories and wheels. We planned the regrouping of artillery to threatened areas, identified and studied the routes of movement.

But literally two pages later we read: "The army received two anti-tank artillery regiments, two cannon regiments, two divisions of the Moscow artillery school, two regiments and three Katyusha divisions for reinforcement. At that time, we had a lot of artillery. But take into account the hundred-kilometer front of defense! .. "The reader remains in the dark whether at that moment there was enough artillery of the 16th Army or there was an acute shortage of it. By the way, Rokossovsky, like other Soviet memoirists, usually does not reveal the exact

composition

armies and fronts subordinate to him, which often makes it difficult to compare with the German formations that opposed him.

In the meantime, let's sum up the sad result of the Vyazemsky battle and try to understand the reasons for one of the most difficult defeats of the Red Army, which threatened Moscow. The former chief of staff of the Western Front, V. D. Sokolovsky, frankly dissembled in his memoirs about the Vyazemsky battle:

"On October 14, the fascist German command announced the encirclement of the main forces of the Red Army in the central Moscow direction. At the same time, it was reported about the capture of 350 thousand

Soviet prisoners of war and a large number of weapons. The number of those surrounded

divisions - 45. These data were used by German bourgeois historians, to whom

joined by historians from the United States, England and France.

In fact, our 19th, 20th, 24th and 32nd armies were surrounded in the area of Vyazma and Bryansk, a total of less than 20 divisions, and many of them, having suffered heavy losses in previous battles, totaled 2-3 thousand people. Most of the troops of the Bryansk, Western and Reserve Fronts retreated in an organized manner by October 20, creating a new front of defense. The encircled Soviet troops pinned down a significant number of fascist divisions. Subsequently, part of the encircled troops of the Western and Reserve Fronts under the command of Lieutenant General I.V. Boldin left the encirclement. Many units joined the partisan detachments or formed new partisan detachments (which, by the way, is not denied by bourgeois historians)."

In fact, both the number of encircled divisions and their losses were several times greater than Marshal Sokolovsky claimed after the war, on whom a part of

responsibility for catastrophe that befell the front. The defeat of the troops of the Western, Reserve and Bryansk fronts in October 1941 created the prerequisites for the offensive of the German Army Group Center directly on the Soviet capital. However, the unfavorable weather conditions of the autumn thaw did not

allowed the Germans immediately build on success and go directly to Moscow, which at that moment was still very poorly protected. In the future, the courage of the defenders of the city, the approach of reserves from the depths of the country, as well as the difficulties encountered in supplying the German troops in the autumn-winter period, thwarted the Typhoon plan and did not allow the German troops to capture the capital.

In this case, the slush interfered more with the advancing motorized German troops than with the retreating Soviet units, which had significantly less vehicles. The former commander of the 3rd Panzer Group Herman Goth, not without reason, asserted: "It was not the Russian winter, but the autumn rains that put an end to the German offensive. It rained day and night, rain

walked continuously, interspersed with snow. The roads were wet and traffic stopped. The lack of ammunition, fuel and lubricants and food determined the tactical and operational situation for the next three weeks.

However, the German general forgot about another really decisive factor - this hundreds of thousands

Soviet soldiers quickly transferred to Moscow from Siberia and the Far East and did not flinch under the onslaught of German tanks. I forgot about the talented Soviet generals who

managed

to force the troops to defend stubbornly. Mud and frost alone could not stop the Germans, which is forgotten by many Western historians, who still linger on the version of "General Frost".

As you know, as a result of the counteroffensive, Army Group Center was driven back from Moscow by

150-200 kilometers. However, the reasons why the Germans were at the gates of the capital, in Soviet

time were reduced mainly to the numerical superiority of the Wehrmacht, especially in tanks and aircraft. Only in the last 15 years has a more objective view of this problem become possible.

The directive on the transition to defense in the Western direction was given by the Headquarters of the Supreme Command

only on September 27, 1941, and three days later the 2nd Panzer Group launched an offensive against the Bryansk Front, which had

previously unsuccessfully tried to defeat it. There was no way to prepare the defense for three days. The position of the Western and

Reserve Fronts was no better, which had previously also been on the offensive for one and a half to two months and had not had time to prepare a long-term defense.

Back on September 21, 1941, von Bock wrote in his diary: "The Russians continue to press on Guderian's 2nd Panzer Group

from the east. The 29th motorized division (Fremerey) in the area near Novgorod-Seversky is opposed by units of eight to nine

Russian divisions. Fighting on this sector of the front continued the next day. True, on September 20, in other sectors of the army

group, it was confidently noted that the enemy was clearly going over to the defensive. But even two weeks was not enough

to properly prepare to repel an enemy offensive. Moreover, some attacks of local significance still continued. In particular, on September

23, Halder noted "minor enemy attacks" at the front of Army Group Center. According to M. Khodarenko and B. Nevzorov,

"formations of the 16th, 19th, 22nd, 24th, 29th and 43rd armies advanced even in

the last ten days of September, the group of General Ermakov - the entire second half of it, and the 13th Army, in fact, the entire month.

This diverted the troops from the organization of defense in depth, did not allow the creation of defensive groupings, and ultimately

led to large losses of personnel. So, the Ermakov group only lost 4913 on September 27

Human

dead, wounded and missing." The former deputy chief of staff of the Bryansk Front, General L. M. Sandalov, admitted in

his memoirs: "The fact that Ermakov's group led

in the second half of September, mainly offensive battles and paid little attention to defense issues, weakened the left-flank troops of the front, and brought enormous benefits to the enemy. The former commander of the Bryansk Front, Marshal A. I. Eremenko, on the contrary, stated in his memoirs: "Summing up the combat activities of the troops of the Bryansk Front for the period from August 14 to September 30, 1941, it should be said that as a result of , especially a counterattack in the Trubchevsk area, the Nazis were inflicted

significant

losses that weakened the power of their strike groups. But he also notes that the troops of the Ermakov group and the 13th Army received an order to go on the defensive only on September 28.

Contrary to popular belief, the Soviet troops were not much inferior to the enemy in terms of people and equipment. The number of personnel of Army Group Center at the beginning of October was 1,929,406 people, of which most of them participated in Operation Typhoon. They had 1387

aircraft and about 1700 tanks. They were opposed by the troops of three Soviet fronts, which, according to K. Reinhardt, had 1,252,591 personnel, 849 tanks, 5,637 guns and 4,961 mortars, 62,651 vehicles and tractors, 936 aircraft, including 545 fighters on the front line, about 730 kilometers.

The troops of the six armies of the Western Front took up defensive positions in the main, Moscow direction in a strip 340 kilometers wide from Lake Seliger to Yelnya. The troops of the 24th and 43rd armies of the Reserve Front defended the line from Yelnya to the Roslavl-Kirov railway in a strip up to 100 kilometers wide, and the 31st, 49th, 32nd and 33rd armies of the Reserve Front occupied positions in the rear of the Western Front in a strip wide 300 kilometers along the line Ostashkov - Selizharovo - east of Dorogobuzh. The troops of the Bryansk Front (50th, 3rd, 13th Army, task force of Major General A.N. Ermakov; commander - Colonel General A.I. Eremenko) covered the Bryansk-Kaluga and Sevsko-Orlovsk-Tula directions; the front line of their defense in a strip 290 kilometers wide passed along the line Snopot - Pochep - Pogar - Glukhov. Probably, the deployment of four armies on the rear defensive line was a mistake. After breaking through the defenses, they

were able to neither launch a counterattack nor delay the advance of the enemy and were defeated. It would be better to use them to hold the main line of defense.

In general, the existing balance of forces allowed the Red Army to successfully defend itself, provided that the actions of all the forces defending in the Moscow direction were coordinated and their correct

groupings. On 1 kilometer of the defense front, there were an average of about 1650 fighters, 14.2 guns and mortars (including 8 guns), 1.65 tanks, 1.3 aircraft. Taking into account the fact that a significant part of the defense zone was occupied by impenetrable forests and swamps, it was possible to significantly increase the density of troops by concentrating troops in the most dangerous areas where German tanks could pass. However, since the troops of three fronts

led

offensive operations until the last ten days of September, there was practically no time left for regrouping. For comparison: the Germans in Normandy in June 1944 density

artillery was less than three guns and less than one tank per kilometer of front, nevertheless they

for almost two months it was possible to hold the front against the Normandy bridgehead allies.

On September 24, 1941, the Chief of the General Staff of the Wehrmacht Ground Forces, Colonel General Franz Halder, while at the headquarters of Army Group Center in Smolensk, together with the Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces, Field Marshal Walter von Brauchitsch, wrote in his diary:

"Von Bock said he wanted to go on the offensive on the front of Guderian 30.9, and on

the rest

plots - 2.10. In any case, between these two phases of the offensive there must be a break of at least 48 hours. Field Marshal Fedor von Bock himself, commander of Army Group Center, noted in his diary on the same day:

except that Guderian was allowed to advance on 30 September. For me, it is better if he has a little head start, because he is still quite far from the right flank, on which the main attack will be made, and the return from the actions of the tanks can be expected only 4-5 days after the start of the operation. Other commanders will be ready by October 2, only Goth (3rd Panzer Group) proposes October 3. In fact, such a two-day separation of the start time of the offensive in different directions made it possible to hope that the Soviet reserves would be first of all transferred to repel Guderian's attack, which would make it easier to launch an offensive.

on the main

direction. The poor coordination of the actions of the three Soviet fronts also had an effect here. In practice, they were carried out by the Headquarters, which, however, had to pay attention to all strategic areas, and therefore it was catastrophically late in making decisions on repelling the Typhoon.

On October 2, Halder wrote with satisfaction in his diary: "The main forces of the army group

went on the offensive ("Typhoon") and are successfully advancing. Guderian believes that his formations broke through the enemy's defenses to the full depth ... The command of the armies and tank groups, like 22.6, gives different answers to the question of whether the enemy intended to conduct a stubborn defense or not. Only in those sectors where the enemy had rear defensive positions, that is, in front of the 4th and 9th armies, could it be assumed in advance, with certainty, that he was preparing for defense. It can be assumed that he intended to hold his positions in other sectors, but due to a significant decrease in the combat effectiveness of his troops, he was quickly crushed by our units. However, even after this, despite the hasty withdrawal in certain sectors of the front, no organization of a systematic and deep withdrawal was observed. Enemy groups stuck in large

forested areas between our shock wedges, will soon show us that the enemy Not

I was about to retreat." And already on October 4, Halder wrote with satisfaction in his diary: "Operation Gaifun is developing almost classically. The tank group of Guderian, advancing through Orel, reached Mtsensk without encountering any resistance. Göppiner's tank group quickly broke through the enemy's defenses and went to Mozhaisk. The Goth tank group reached the Hill, thus approaching the upper reaches of the Dnieper, and in the north advanced to the White. The enemy continues to hold unattacked sections of the front everywhere, as a result

what in

In the future, a deep encirclement of these enemy groups is planned.

The reason for the encirclement of a large number of Soviet divisions was an unsuccessful grouping in the defense, when as a result many areas were poorly covered. It was on them that the German tank groups hit. And the order to withdraw was very late - it was received only on October 5, but already on October 7, the tank groups of Guderian and Goth closed the ring around Vyazma. And only on October 12, all the troops operating in the Western direction were united under the leadership of the newly appointed commander of the Western Front, G.K. Zhukov.

The Vyazemsky battle turned out to be one of the most severe defeats of the Red Army in the Great Patriotic War. As M. Khodarenok and B. Nevzorov

note, "on the central sector of the Soviet-German front, seven field headquarters of the armies (out of 15), 64 divisions (out of 95), 11 tank brigades (out of 13) and 50 artillery regiments of the RGC (out of 64). These formations and units were part of 13 armies and one operational group. The summary of the German command following the results of the battle spoke of 673 thousand prisoners and 1277 captured Soviet tanks. Are common

losses of Soviet troops in the period from September 30 to October 19 inclusive amounted to: irretrievable losses - 855.1 thousand, sanitary - 104.1 thousand, total - 959.2 thousands of people.

Losses killed can be estimated at 180 thousand people. The German army group "Center" in the period from September 30 to October 20 lost about 50 thousand killed, wounded and missing.

According to the entries in the diary of F. Halder, by September 26, all the losses of the German ground forces in the East since June 22, 1941 amounted to 12,604 officers and 385,326 non-commissioned officers and privates wounded, 4,864 officers were killed and 108,487 non-commissioned officers and privates were killed and 416 officers and 23,273 NCOs and enlisted men missing. In total, 17,884 officers and 517,086 non-commissioned officers and enlisted men were lost.

From June 22 to November 6, 1941, the losses of the German ground forces amounted to 15,919 officers and 496,157 non-commissioned officers and privates wounded, 6,017 officers and 139,164 non-commissioned officers and privates

killed and 496 officers and 28,355 non-commissioned officers and privates missing. In total, 22,432 officers and 663,676 non-commissioned officers and enlisted men were lost. Thus, the total losses of the German ground forces in the period from September 26 to November 6, 1941, when Operation Typhoon was carried out, amounted to 151,138 people, including 31,850 killed and 5,162 missing. All this time, the troops of the Army Group "South" continued the offensive in the Donbass and Crimea, and the Army Group "North" launched an attack on Tikhvin on October 16.

But the battles on the fronts of these army groups were much less fierce. Taking into account the fact that at the beginning of October there were 1,929,406 people in Army Group Center (against about 1 million 250 thousand people in the three Soviet fronts opposing it), the other two army groups at that moment accounted for about 1.5 million people, or about 44 percent

personal

the composition of the German army in the East, whose total strength was about 3.4 million

Human. Given that the intensity of the fighting on the fronts of Army Groups North and South was lower than on the front of Army Group Center, we can assume that the percentage of average daily casualties of the total number of personnel could be in Army Groups North and "South" is half that in Army Group Center. Then the losses of this latter in the period from September 26 to November 6, 1941, can be estimated at approximately 78 percent of the total losses of the German ground forces in the East during the indicated period. In this case, the loss of von Bock's army group

can be determined at about 118 thousand people, of whom died or disappeared without lead about

29 thousand people. Thus, the irretrievable German losses in the Vyazemsko-Bryansk battle turned out to be 29.5 times lower than the irretrievable Soviet losses, and the total - 8.1 times. If almost all

missing Germans in this battle are attributed to the dead (captured Germans there almost not

was), then the ratio of those killed will be 6:1.

In general, the reasons for the defeat of the Soviet troops near Bryansk and Vyazma in October 1941 were: poor preparation of defensive lines, due to the fact that

the transition to the defense of the Western, Bryansk and Reserve fronts was carried out late; poor coordination of the three

Soviet

fronts in the western direction, which actually did not have a single leadership; incorrect determination of the directions of the main attack of the German

troops; belated permission to depart; rapid loss of control of troops by Soviet commanders after the breakthrough of the front. Wines in

all this

lies both at Headquarters and at the command of the fronts.

Soviet troops in October 1941 in the Moscow direction were very poorly controlled. There were three fronts here, the Western, Reserve and Bryansk, the commanders of which were practically

coordinated their actions with each other. The Stavka, headed by I. V. Stalin, did not carry out such vital coordination. Even worse was the fact that the

troops of the Western and Reserve fronts were located in alternating bands, and most of the armies of the Reserve Front, being the second echelon of the

Western, did not obey the commander of this latter, which made it difficult to conduct defensive battles. Due to the lack of radio communications and combat

experience, the commanders of the armies and fronts relied more on wire communications and on those sent to

delegate troops. But in combat conditions, wired communications often broke, and the delegates did not could

to find headquarters, which often changed their place of deployment due to the fact that the enemy broke through the front and had to quickly retreat.

The organization of the command of the troops covering the Moscow direction also wished

much better. The three fronts had 16 armies, which, in turn, were subordinate to 95 divisions and 13 tank brigades. On average, one army headquarters

accounted for seven and a half divisions and about one tank brigade. This was one and a half to two times more than in one German army corps, numbering from

three to five divisions. After the catastrophic defeats of the first months of the war, the corps link in the Red Army was

eliminated - allegedly due to a lack of experienced staff personnel. However, in fact, the functions of corps headquarters in our country began to be performed by army headquarters. It is no coincidence that the number of German corps headquarters was approximately equal to the number of army headquarters of the Soviet troops opposing them. But each Soviet headquarters had a significantly larger number of formations than each German, and there were fewer means of communication, which only increased the chaos.

During the Vyazemsky battle, the commanders of the Soviet fronts, quickly losing contact with the troops, went to those armies that, as they thought, were subjected to the main blows of the enemy, leaving their headquarters at their former locations. The same thing happened to many army commanders. As a result, the troops received conflicting orders from the commanders and their headquarters, as well as from the Headquarters. In parallel, the commanders were looking for their headquarters, the headquarters for the commanders, and the Stavka for both.

Purely theoretically, in conditions of poor communication and coordination of actions, it would generally be more reasonable to build defense in one echelon. After all, the armies of the second echelon in practice did not have time to take part in repelling the German offensive and for the most part died surrounded. And so, if the density of defense due to the second echelons had been increased, the Germans had spent more time and effort on the breakthrough, and a significant part of the Soviet troops would probably have been able to avoid encirclement. But neither Stalin nor his generals and marshals wanted to admit even to themselves what by the level of operational-tactical skill, the Wehrmacht then completely surpassed the Red Army, and that for a more successful fight against it, it was necessary to use the tactics of the weakest against the strongest.

Another long-standing sin of the Soviet system, which has not been eliminated to this day, was fully manifested during the Vyazemsko-Bryansk battle. This is a desire to embellish reality in reports to superiors and to justify one's own actions (or inaction) at any cost. In Stalin's time, failure in this kind of bureaucratic fiction threatened death. And, as a result, in the reports, at first, the scale of the German breakthrough was downplayed, since the generals still expected to restore the situation with counterattacks and forgot to inform the front headquarters about the abandoned cities and stations. And the commanders of the fronts and the Headquarters were late in making a decision to withdraw. Later, when the scale of German successes became clear, in Soviet reports, on the contrary, the enemy forces were significantly exaggerated in order to justify their own defeats. All this made it difficult for the commanders of the fronts and the Headquarters to make the right decisions. In addition, fearing to repeat the fate of Army General D. G. Pavlov, who was shot along with a group of generals for

failure on

the Western Front at the beginning of the war, the commanders were reluctant to withdraw troops from unattacked

sectors of the front, which only made it easier for the Germans to create a giant cauldron.

As for the fate of those surrounded near Vyazma, perhaps the best course of action for those surrounded would not be to break through immediately, but to

take up all-round defense and, receiving air supplies, wait for outside help, diverting as many enemy troops as possible. However, this option can only be

considered theoretically. Before the war, Soviet generals and commanders were not taught to conduct all-round defense, since it was believed that the Red Army would

only

advance. Very quickly, all airfields were lost in the boilers, and not one of the encircled groups even tried to create a long-term defense.

85 thousand people managed to get out of the Vyazemsky "boiler", and 23 - from the Bryansk thousands.

Let's add to them 98 thousand servicemen from the 29th and 33rd armies who escaped

encirclement, Ermakov's group

and from the 22nd Army, in which only one division was surrounded. This was all that the Soviet command had at that moment to protect Moscow. Now there was

hope

just on

fresh troops from Siberia and the Far East and some other internal military districts, hastily transferred to the Mozhaish line of defense.

On October 13, Zhukov, having taken command of the Western Front, immediately issued a formidable order, which included the following lines:

"At this moment, everyone, as one, from the Red Army soldier to the highest commander, must valiantly and

selflessly fight for their homeland, for Moscow!

'Cowardice and panic under these conditions are tantamount to betrayal and treason. In this regard, I order:

1. Cowards and alarmists who leave the battlefield, retreat without permission from their positions, throw weapons and equipment, to be shot on the spot.

2. The military tribunal and the prosecutor of the front to ensure the implementation of this order. Comrades, Red Army soldiers, commanders and political workers, be courageous and steadfast. No step back! Forward for the Motherland!

On the same day, Zhukov ordered Rokossovsky to include Volokolamsky in the 16th Army.

fortified area. He

ordered the army headquarters to be located in the Yazvische region, and the command post in Volokolamsk. Zhukov ordered "the troops

of the 16th, 5th, 43rd and 49th armies of the Western Front to go over to active defense on

prepared line by the Moscow Reserve Front with the task of preventing the enemy from breaking through the line of fortifications in an easterly direction, "and also," given the particular importance of fortifications, to announce to all personnel up to and including the detachment a

categorical prohibition to retreat from the line. All those who retreated without a written order from the Armed Forces of the front and the army are to be shot."

But already on October 19, Zhukov had to prepare and approve at the Headquarters a plan for the withdrawal of troops from the Mozhaisk line of defense.

On the night of October 16, from half past one to two o'clock, Zhukov had an unpleasant conversation with Rokossovsky:

"Rokossovsky. At the Rokossovsky apparatus.

Zhukov. At the Zhukov apparatus.

First. What do you know about the enemy who broke through in the morning and entered the zone of the 16th Army? Second. In whose hands is Art.

Volokolamsk, where are ours and where is the enemy?

Third. Why didn't you secure the telephone wiring with you?

Fourth. What is the 18th division doing to delay the advance of the enemy?

Rokossovsky. It is known that the tank column that broke through at Roose passed headlong, and her

by the end of the day, the advanced units reached Pokrovskoye. In Ruza, an enemy infantry regiment.

2. In the area of Art. Volokolamsk is fighting with a group of enemy tanks and submachine gunners that have broken through. By the end of the day, under

pressure of 29 md and 2 td, going on the attack three times with strong enemy bomber aircraft, having suffered heavy losses, our units were thrown back to lines

railways.

The enemy brought 125 tanks into battle from the direction of Ostashevo, 45 enemy tanks were destroyed and knocked out. The enemy suffered heavy

losses. The battle was stubborn and lasted continuously from morning until the end of the day. On the site of the cadet regiment, the enemy

offensive was repulsed. On the direction of Spass-Pomazkino, the enemy infantry battalion that had penetrated our defenses was completely

destroyed. The position of the right flank and center is stable. The left flank is weak and

could not withstand the
pressure of such superior enemy forces.

We organize the defense of the Volokolamsk line, r. Lama. There is nothing to strengthen the left flank. We will fight to the last fighter.

In this battle, our artillery suffered heavy losses with crushed and knocked out guns and
personnel.

I'm worried about the Volokolamsk highway in the sections east of Volokolamsk to Novo Petrovskoye, because I have nothing to
cover this section with. I
assume that the entire mobile group of the enemy will flow around Volokolamsk from the southeast in the morning with
access to the highway.

3. The telephone is under the jurisdiction of the NKVD. Our request was denied by them.

4. The 18th division occupies the Spas-Nudol, Novo-Petrovskoye, Yadrenevo sector. One battalion, on your orders, to the Onufriev
area with the task
of preventing the enemy from advancing to Istra.

5 :>

Zhukov. What do you propose to do to eliminate the enemy who has entered the Pokrovskoye area?

Rokossovsky. Comrade Commander, after the destruction of the enemy forces that have entered this area and are operating in this direction,
the 28th
brigade can be thrown. She has not yet arrived in the Novo-Petrovskoye area, but the brigade commander was in the area and received an
order to
clarify
strength
enemy and accordingly attack and destroy them. In the event that large enemy forces operating in the Pokrovskoye area are discovered, I
consider it more
expedient to give him a fight on

line of defense of the 18th Rifle Division, to upset it with defensive fire and finish it off with the actions of a tank brigade, without throwing
tanks forward for
independent actions without interaction with their troops.

Zhukov.

1. The enemy's intention is clear. He seeks to capture Novo-Petrovskoe, Istra.

2. It would be wrong to allow a mobile enemy with tanks with weak defenses of a newly formed two-regiment division.
Such a defense he will be able to
crush before,

what will be
the opposition.

3. At your disposal is the 28th brigade, which has already been rolled up to Pokrovskoye.

4. The 4th tank brigade, which should be in the Onufriev area in the morning, the 27th brigade, which is unloading in the morning in Istra, four armored trains: two - for operations in the area of st. Volokolamsk, two - u in the Novo-Petrovskoye sector, with the task of destroying small enemy groups in the Pokrovskoye area and driving them back to the south, further moving through Lyskovo to Ruza.

The 4th brigade through Onufriev to strike at the enemy in the area of Starye Klemyanitsy and, interacting with the 28th brigade, strike at Ruza. The battalion in Onufriev is given to reinforce the brigade. From the area of Oreshki, Nikolskoye, Kokovino, units of the 133rd Rifle Division strike.

After unloading, the 27th tank brigade should be concentrated in the forest in the Zhilino area as

front reserve, but if necessary, report - we will leave this brigade in order to liquidate the Ruza grouping of the enemy.

Art. Volokolamsk, mountains. Volokolamsk under your personal responsibility comrade. Stalin forbade surrendering to the enemy, and on this issue you need to convey Comrade through me. Stalin, what did you do to carry out his order.

Doesn't it seem to you that your command post is now out of place and your front was crumbling faster?

Rokossovsky. Just the command post was in place, because from this command post we were able to monitor and direct the actions of all units. I personally stayed all day where the situation demanded it. This is not related to the actions of the command post, which is obliged to ensure communication with all parts, being in such a place where his work would not be interrupted by the impact of artillery, mortars and individual enemy tanks.

Tov. Commander, please clarify whether the demarcation lines established by your order of 21.10.41 No. 00 358 remain in force, and who is responsible for the operation to defeat the enemy grouping that broke through from the Ruza area, since this area is included in the zone of my neighbor on the left?

Regarding the 4th brigade, I do not know where it is - I do not know. It is difficult for me to lead this operation, since, from your words, I will have to lead the operations at Volokolamsk.

As for this point, I already reported to you that we will fight to the last fighter, but please note that the forces are unequal, the enemy outnumbered three times in infantry, plus tank connections. There is nothing I can do to improve this direction. We will continue the fight with the same squad that participated today, and greatly thinned.

Now I have received a message about the advancing towards Volokolamsk from the west of the 109th, 101st infantry division of the enemy, this aggravates our situation even more. (In fact, there was no division with the number 109 in the Wehrmacht at all, and the 101st light infantry division, although it existed, operated in Ukraine in October 1941. - B.S.)

Zhukov. You are wasting your time. We report ten times that the incredible forces of the enemy and the insignificant forces of your army are not supposed to be the commander. We are well aware

And

The government knows what you have and what the enemy has. You do not proceed from fear, which is still very doubtful, but proceed from the task and the real forces that you have. Orders of the Government and command must be carried out without any preliminary reservations.

Second. Your border with the 5th Army remains as specified in the order, but the enemy enters your Novo-Petrovskoe, where your 18th Rifle Division is deployed. The first actions will take place on your territory. If there is success, then the enemy, apparently, will retreat to Ruza to the territory of your neighbor. For the continuity of the situation and to link the interaction from 5 A, from where the 4th

tank brigade, sent along with the brigade, deputy commander of the 5th Army, Lieutenant General Bogdanov.

Since this business takes place at the junction, the organization of interaction is required here. Obviously, Malandin will be sent from the front, who will be in Novo-Petrovskoye by dawn. It would not be bad, at the expense of the right flank of the 18th division, to strengthen the support of the 28th tank brigade from Novo-Petrovskoye to Pokrovskoye.

Is everything clear?
Rokossovsky. All clear.

Zhukov. Conduct reconnaissance and report systematically from early morning. Order the phone to be put on immediately, and you needlessly surrender to the NKVD. We command, not the NKVD. You should have reported to me immediately. Report urgently who specifically refused to put the phone.

Rokossovsky. Yes, comrade. commanding. I report that the order is not double they fulfilled.

Zhukov. Now I have received information: the 28th brigade concentrated in Novo-Petrovskoye, where, after

gas stations will go down to Pokrovskoye. Take it into your own hands. All.

Rokossovsky. Eat".

Probably, a reference to the NKVD was required to justify the lack of telephone communication with the headquarters of the Western Front - so that the authorities would not bother once again.

Volokolamsk was considered one of the key points of the Soviet defense on the way to Moscow, the Headquarters and Stalin personally attached special importance to its retention. Rokossovsky and his division commanders did everything to keep the city.

A. A. Lobachev, a member of the military council of the 16th Army, recalled how the battles for Volokolamsk proceeded: "According to the plan proposed by V. I.

Kazakov, our army intercepted the Volokolamsk highway with two anti-tank areas. The first of them relied on Spas-Ryukhovskoye, the second was equipped at the Volokolamsk station. Anti-tank strongholds with several anti-tank guns were created at the forefront, as well as in tank-hazardous areas in the depths of the defense. During the battle, it was supposed to maneuver explosive anti-tank barriers. For this purpose, fighter detachments were created, which included a platoon of sappers. Each such detachment had 100-105 anti-tank mines, Molotov cocktails and grenades. The sappers acted heroically ...

The regiment of I. V. Koprov, having received a blow of enormous force, found himself in a very difficult situation. part of it

units, like Maslov's company, still held out in strongholds, while others were fighting. The soldiers set fire to the tanks, passing them through the battle formations, and immediately destroyed the German infantry. About

one hundred

tanks and two battalions of submachine gunners.

Tanks broke into Ignatkovo, where the headquarters of the 1075th regiment was. Chief of Staff Captain Manaenkov

led the battle for the village, blew up two tanks with grenades and, hiding with the fighters in a barn, fought back to the last bullet. The Nazis set fire to the barn.

None of them came out with their hands up."

According to Lobachev, Rokossovsky was in the 316th division, which suffered the main blow, in order to reinforce it with anything possible if necessary:

"The commander was on the NP with General Panfilov. The division commander had just given the order to the remnants of the two battalions of the regiment to withdraw to the northern bank of the Ruza and gain a foothold in the trenches dug out by the training battalion. This battalion - the only reserve commander - was in a heavy battle for Ostashevo.

Part of the village has already been captured by German tankers. Battalion Commander Captain Lysenko led himself

one of the companies of his training battalion in a counterattack. But how could the fighters, armed with bottles of combustible mixture, cope with several dozen tanks? The captain died a hero's death. Rokossovsky ordered the 289th anti-tank regiment to be immediately sent to Spas-Ryukhovskoye.

The surviving soldiers of the 296th regiment, by his order, were withdrawn to Stanovichche.

Panfilov also sent Reshetnikov's second rifle battalion, which was coming out from the left flank, there.

"You won't be able to hold Stanovichche with these forces," said Rokossovsky. - And you need it no matter what

began to hold...

People will rest for the night. I have nothing more, Comrade Commander. I will send everyone who survived from the study battalion there ...

Without taking Spas-Ryukhovskoye, the enemy made his way around. The 289th regiment was taken to new positions. The 290th Artillery Regiment

in Ryukhovskoye has now entered into an unequal battle against tanks. By the end of the day, both anti-tank regiments, pressed by the

enemy, stood near the Volokolamsk station and stayed there until night. These regiments were the first among the artillery units of the Soviet Army to receive an honorary

ranks of the guards.

At night, Rokossovsky ordered the 316th division to withdraw to the eastern bank of the Lama. Here, together with the 690th regiment, the Panfilovites held

back the superior enemy forces for another two days.

troops.

The fighting continued until 27 October. On this day, after strong aviation and artillery and mortar preparation, the enemy managed to break through the defenses of the 690th regiment and to 16

hours to capture Volokolamsk.

Rokossovsky demanded that the commander of the 316th division I.V. Panfilov keep Volokolamsk, but the forces were unequal. The commander and a member of the military council spent a lot of time in the 316th division, trying to help Panfilov organize the defense.

In the report of the chief of artillery of the 16th Army, V. I. Kazakov, on the actions of anti-tank artillery in the Volokolamsk direction, compiled at the end of October, it was noted:

"In the period from 15.10 to 22.10, the enemy, undertaking repeated tank, and then infantry with

attack tanks, broke through the left flank of the defense of the 16th army (or rather, pushed back due to the small number

our infantry occupying the defense ... in one line of company strongholds without a second echelons

and reserves) at the Baboshino site, temporary warehouse. Bolychev, having lost more than 80 tanks and a large quantity

infantry, captured the Kuzminskoe, Chertanovo, Milovanye border. As a result of the fighting, our infantry

units (1075 joint ventures and units of the left flank 1073 joint ventures) were dispersed. From 22 to 24.10.41 in

as a result of heavy losses in tanks and infantry in this sector, the enemy stopped the offensive ...

At 10.30 25.10, the combat formations of the 296th artillery regiment simultaneously from the directions of Dubosekovo, Spas-Ryukhovskoye, Ivlevo were attacked by

the enemy with a force of up to 80 tanks and up to one infantry

shelf. The regiment opened organized artillery fire both on tanks and on infantry

enemy. As a result of the fire, 16 tanks and up to 2 infantry companies were destroyed. Breaking through minor

the infantry forces located in this sector, the tanks and infantry of the enemy went directly to the firing positions of the batteries. The personnel of the guns began to suffer heavy losses from automatic and

enemy infantry fire. 6 guns of the regiment ... were crushed by tanks and destroyed by their fire.

Seeing the futility of staying at this line, the regiment commander gave the order to withdraw the materiel to the southern outskirts of Art. Volokolamsk, where to go on the defensive ...

From the actions of artillery, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1) Artillery had absolutely no losses from tanks and had completely insignificant losses from

enemy aircraft (despite the intense bombardment - 25 aircraft) as in
personal

composition, and in the materiel until it suffered heavy losses from the infantry and

enemy submachine gunners who entered the flanks and rear of the artillery battle formations.

2) With the normal presence of our infantry to cover the guns, artillery would not have
such

heavy losses, and the enemy would have had heavy losses in tanks and infantry, since under these conditions the artillerymen would not have had
to split their attention
to repel the advancing

infantry tanks, i.e., fire shrapnel at buckshot.

3) Infantry units, due to their small number, could not provide the front, flanks and even the rear of the artillery combat formations. Only the
courage of the
personnel of the 3rd battery 768 ap PTO and

the correct decision of the commander and commissar of the battery ensured the withdrawal of material
parts and

personnel from the created difficult situation for this battery.

With an objective analysis of the cited documents, it becomes clear that no fault

Rokossovsky is not in the surrender of Volokolamsk. The decisive role was played by the absolute superiority of the Germans in
tanks (there were none
at that moment in Rokossovsky's army) and the dominance of the Luftwaffe in the air. The proposal of the headquarters of the Western Front to start
street fighting in
Volokolamsk by local forces

workers, untrained in military affairs, Rokossovsky, thank God, did not begin to put into practice. This would only lead to unnecessary civilian casualties,
but would not

prevent the fall of the city. The front of the 16th Army was too wide for the amount of infantry and artillery that was part of it. Even
with the concentration of the

bulk of the artillery in the most tank-prone areas, it was impossible to guarantee a reliable anti-tank defense. In addition, there was not enough
infantry to cover

the artillery. Rokossovsky had no reserves, and the proposal to create them at the expense of L. M. Dovator's cavalry group was too risky: it
was difficult

for cavalrymen, who had little artillery, to fight tanks.

The reproaches to I.V. Panfilov are also unfair that he put the less resistant 690th
regiment on

direction of the enemy's main attack. Just Germans, having better maneuverability

And

dominance in the air, were able to find the weakest place in the defense and make a breakthrough there. How this happened is well shown in
Lobachev's
memoirs.

The main thing was that Rokossovsky's army held back the enemy for two weeks, sharply

slowing down its
advance, and thereby gained time for the creation of new defensive lines and the approach of reserves.

Rokossovsky himself described the October battles for Volokolamsk as follows:

"On the morning of October 16, the enemy struck with tank and motorized formations on the left
flank of our army - just where we expected and where we prepared with special care to meet him.

Only in this sector the enemy concentrated four divisions - two infantry and two tank. The main blow fell on the
316th division of Panfilov,
the front line of which was 12-15 kilometers from the Volokolamsk highway.

At the same time, the marshal noted:

"In the north, the enemy, continuing the offensive, captured Kalinin on October 14, pushed back the right-flank units of the
30th Army, advanced deeply to the east along the northern coast of the Moscow Sea ... The Nazis managed to

significantly push the right flank of our other

neighbor - the 5th army. The enemy captured Mozhaisk and Ruza, advanced to the east directly on the sector
adjoining our defense zone, and bypassed Volokolamsk from the south.

At the same time, after several days of stubborn fighting, he retreated east of the river
Lama

cadet regiment, defending north of Volokolamsk. This means that the enemy managed to occupy an overhanging
position from this
side as well. And finally, on October 27, having introduced large forces of tanks and infantry with the support of
artillery and
aviation, the enemy captured Volokolamsk. But the enemy's attempt to intercept the highway east of the city, going to
Istra, was
repulsed by decisive and skillful actions of the cavalry division of General Pliev, who arrived in time and prepared
for battle, with
artillery attached to it.

On the night of October 30, Zhukov, by a special directive, canceled Rokossovsky's order to give tank brigades
to rifle
divisions. The directive stated:

"1. With the addition of 316, 18 sd tank brigades, you have lost your only means of maneuver,

And

rifle divisions will very quickly dishevel the tank brigades, and therefore your order to add

tank brigade divisions should be canceled immediately and keep the 4th brigade behind the defenses of the 316th rifle division along the Volokolamsk, Novo-Petrovskoye highway, keep the 28th brigade against Skirmanovo, reinforcing it with rifle and anti-tank weapons.

2126 sd 30.10 pull Ukino, Novoe Elgozino, Parfenkino, Steshino, Aksenikha to the line, where to place it on the defensive, dig deeper into the ground and strengthen the defense with engineering and anti-tank weapons.

3. Attacks and counterattacks, until the creation of a stubborn defense ... do not carry out. Tank brigades should only be used in ambushes.

Meanwhile, Rokossovsky's decision to use tank brigades as direct infantry support was, in principle, correct. Probably, the experience of the first months of the Great Patriotic War, including the battles of his mechanized corps in Ukraine, convinced Konstantin Konstantinovich that the massive use of Soviet tanks against the Germans led only to unnecessary losses, especially in the conditions of the dominance of enemy aircraft in the air and the superiority of the Germans in training of tank crews and commanders. Using the same

tanks dispersed, for direct support of the infantry, would reduce Soviet losses in armored vehicles, would largely negate the German advantage in training tankers and

the ability to organize a tank battle, and would also reduce the importance of the dominance of the Luftwaffe over the battlefield. But Zhukov had succeeded at Khalkhin Gol precisely because of the massive use of tanks and now hoped to achieve success against the Germans using the same tactics. However, against the German army, which had a large number of tanks and anti-tank weapons, the massive use of tanks did not justify itself - to a large extent

because Zhukov proposed to use tank brigades in isolation from rifle divisions, and this made the tanks vulnerable to German anti-tank weapons.

At the end of October, the Germans captured the Mozhaisk line of defense. Further advance was stopped by mud and stubborn resistance of the Soviet troops. Here is how these events were seen from the German side. On October 14, 1941, on the day when Rokossovsky arrived in Volokolamsk with the headquarters of the 16th Army, Field Marshal Fedor von Bock, commander of Army Group Center, wrote down

in the diary:

"This morning, a new directive came from the High Command of the Ground Forces. It contains nothing new except for one item: High Command

ground forces, which is
toying with the idea of capturing Voronezh, suggested considering the idea of capturing the city by the forces of the right wing of the army
group. In addition, the
army group received orders to concentrate all forces

9th Army, with the exception of the 3rd Panzer Group, along the line Kalinin - Staritsa - Torzhok

And

prepare to move north through Vyshny Volochek in order to destroy the Russian troops opposing the southern wing of Army Group
North. I informed
Vekman (Chief of Staff of the 9th Army. - B.S.) about the dramatic changes that his plans should undergo, as well as about the reasons that prompted
the High Command of the Ground Forces to

change.

Just as it was after Smolensk, the army group is doomed to disperse forces

And

offensive in several different directions, thereby weakening its offensive in the direction of the main attack.

Bock understood that such a dispersal of forces, in conditions when the Red Army was by no means finished yet, threatened with final defeat. He
believed that it
would be expedient to concentrate all forces for the speedy capture of Moscow, but he was forced to submit to Hitler, without whose approval Brauchitsch
would not
have dared to issue the appropriate directive. Nevertheless, Bock succeeded in

flow

over the next few days to convince the commander-in-chief of the ground forces, Field Marshal Braukhich, that his troops should first deal
with the Moscow grouping of Soviet troops, and only then turn to Voronezh and Vyshny Volochok. On October 22, he wrote in his
diary: "Brauchitsch

turned the conversation back to Voronezh. I was asked to answer the question of whether it would be expedient to send the southern
corps of Guderian's
group in the direction of Voronezh. I gave a written answer to this question, stating that the offensive of the 2nd Panzer Army on Tula was of
great importance to
me and that I needed the 2nd Army as a whole, especially considering the fact that the combat capabilities of the tank and motorized divisions had
decreased
many times and did not exceed the combat capabilities of the regiments. In the end, I noticed that in the east of Kursk, parts of the corps
would certainly get stuck in the
mud - just as they are currently bathing in the mud in the west of this city.

On October 30, the High Command of the Ground Forces (OKH) finally abandoned the idea of encircling the troops of the Soviet North-Western Front.
Now
the northern wing of Army Group Center was advancing around Moscow. It was even reinforced by one division from the army group

"North". On that day, Bock wrote in his diary: "The only difference between the oral orders of October 28 and the directives we received today is that now the entire 4th Panzer Group should advance in a northeasterly direction along with the 3rd Panzer Group, bypassing Moscow from the north, and that the 253rd division should be moved from the right wing of the 16th army to the sector of the 9th army. At the same time, he repeated: "The infiltration of the enemy in the gap

between the 4th and 9th armies is intensifying. This is the source of my biggest worry in present time". Rokossovsky's army operated in this direction.

On October 19, von Bock wrote in his diary:

"The troops of the army group gradually begin to get stuck in the mud and swamps. The 3rd Panzer Group is getting almost no fuel." On the same day, the Field Marshal decided to advance on Moscow through Volokolamsk, in connection with which he wrote in his diary: "In order to somehow ensure and support the advance of troops in the general direction of Moscow, I ordered to clear the road leading from the south to Kalinin, and use it to transfer the corps from the right wing of the 9th Army to Volokolamsk with the aim of later joining it to the 4th Army.

On October 25, Bock first noted the increased resistance from Rokossovsky's troops:

"In front of the front of the 4th Army, enemy resistance is intensifying. Russians pulled up fresh forces from Siberia and the Caucasus and launched a counteroffensive on both sides of the road that leads southwest of Moscow. The southern half of the 4th Army, most of whose artillery got stuck in the mud and did not approach the front, was forced to go on the defensive. On the northern wing of the army, the left flank of the tank group, in cooperation with the 5th Corps, is slowly advancing towards Volokolamsk. In order to coordinate the actions of the troops in this sector, I transferred the 5th Corps to the 4th Army. Powerful Russian attacks continue near Kalinin. The 16th Soviet Army had to repel the attacks of the 5th Army Corps and parts of the tank group.

On October 27, Bock noted with satisfaction: "On the northern wing (of the 4th Army. - B.S.), the valiant 5th Corps captured Volokolamsk." But this is where the successes in this direction ended.

The German offensive was halted due to mud and the increased resistance of the Soviet troops. The next day, an entry appeared in von Bock's diary: "The 4th Army was instructed

prepare for severe frosts in order to be able to attack without wasting time even under such conditions in the northern and southern directions from the main highway. In the future, she is invited to deploy her northern wing and attack in the direction of Klin. Field Marshal General was worried that the gap between the 5th Corps at Volokolamsk and the German troops in the Kalinin area exceeded 70 kilometers. However, liquidate

this

break was impossible. On October 29, Bock recorded "powerful Russian attacks in the area of the Moscow highway." And the next day he added: "The infiltration of the enemy in the gap between the 4th and 9th armies is intensifying. This is the source of my biggest worry at the moment."

Almost because of the mud, the German offensive stopped already on October 31. On that day, Bok admitted that "before the onset of serious frosts, an offensive is out of the question." The Field Marshal General also noted on October 31:

"Our losses are growing. In the area of responsibility of the army group, more than twenty battalions are under the command of lieutenants. The Germans continued only local attacks, but they also faced increased resistance from the Soviet troops. On November 2, Bock noted the increased resistance in the Volokolamsk Highway area: "A local attack by units of the 4th Army along the main highway met with fierce resistance."

The commander of the Western Front, Zhukov, did not stop at the most severe measures in order to prevent the withdrawal of troops from their positions. So, on November 3, after the German offensive on Moscow was stopped, he issued an order to shoot the commander and commissar of the 133rd Infantry Division, Lieutenant Colonel A. G. Gerasimov and Brigadier Commissar G. F. Shabalov before the formation for surrendering without an order Ruza. On the same day, Zhukov ordered Rokossovsky to use the cavalry group of General L.M. Dovator to prevent the encirclement of the right-flank grouping of the 16th Army. Rokossovsky was instructed to "urgently close the road to Pokrovskoye and concentrate the Dovator group for operations at the junction between the 316th Rifle Division and the Novo-Petrovsky grouping." Dovator's cavalry were supposed to "move south and actively counteract the development of enemy actions" between Volokolamsk and Novo Petrovsky.

The frosts that came in the second week of November partially neutralized the consequences of the thaw. The German command began to prepare in mid-November to resume the general offensive against Moscow. But Bock now did not really believe that in the course of the upcoming offensive it would be possible to capture the Soviet capital. On November 11, five days before it began, he wrote in his diary:

“This offensive will by no means become a masterpiece of strategic art, since until very recently troop movements have been practically reduced to zero due to

behind

impassable mud, and after a while they will become impossible due to snowfalls. Under such conditions, we can only be helped by concentrated attacks in the direction of the most tactically

profitable points. And these attacks should not be delayed, as I fear that weather conditions may again interfere with our plans. As soon as deep snow falls, all movement will end.”

Somehow, the Germans still managed to prepare the offensive for November 16, but it was carried out, as they say, in the last breath. On November

11, Bock noted: “For the 9th Army: the date of the offensive is November 15. Task: access to the Lama and the Volga reservoir. If the attack develops

successfully, task number two is to reach the Teryaev-Klin-Zavidovo line. The 5th Corps was ordered to capture the commanding heights near

Teryaev as soon as the 9th Army began to attack through the Lama. The Soviet command tried to preempt the enemy.

The 16th Army of Rokossovsky at that moment consisted of four rifle divisions, six cavalry divisions, four tank brigades and one tank division. Army strength

was

approximately 50 thousand fighters, they had 287 field and 180 anti-tank guns, 300 mortars and 150 tanks on a front of 70 kilometers. The

German group opposing it consisted, according to the estimates of the Soviet General Staff, 44 thousand fighters, 350 field and 280

anti-tank guns, 400 mortars and 400 tanks. The 4th Panzer Group of Colonel General Erich Göpner, consisting of the 2nd, 5th, 10th and 11th Panzer

Divisions, the 106th and 35th Infantry Divisions, as well as the SS Reich Motorized Division, acted against Rokossovsky's army. The 2nd Panzer and

106th Infantry Divisions were to advance on Solnechnogorsk, bypassing the Istra Reservoir from the north. The 5th, 10th, and 11th Panzer Divisions and

the SS Reich Division formed a strike force that attacked Solnechnogorsk and Istra from the Volokolamsk region.

On November 15, the Germans pushed Rokossovsky's neighbor on the right - the 30th Army of the Kalinin

Front. In the resulting gap between the 30th and 16th armies, to prevent a breakthrough, it was necessary enter

cavalry units. Meanwhile, Zhukov ordered Rokossovsky to hit the flank and

rear

Volokolamsk grouping of the enemy, in order to disrupt the expected German offensive from the Volokolamsk region.

Konstantin Konstantinovich recalled:

"In late October and early November, the Germans captured several inhabited

points, including Skirmanovo. The Nazis hung from the south over the Volokolamsk-Istra highway. They not only shot through

it with artillery fire, but could at any time intercept and go to the rear of the main grouping of our army in this direction.

It was imperative to expel the enemy from Skirmanovo and eliminate the threat in advance. The solution to this problem fell to the 50th cavalry division of General I. A. Pliev, the 18th rifle division of Colonel P. N. Chernyshev and the tank brigade of M. E.

Katukov, who recently arrived to us. They also attracted several artillery units and divisions of guards mortars.

The risk was that we decided on this business in anticipation of the beginning of the enemy offensive. As they say, the need forced.

But there were certain advantages in this: the German command could hardly have imagined that we would risk ...

The battles for Skirmanovo - from November 11 to 14 - went very well. Artillerymen, mortarmen and

The Katyushas managed to inflict great damage on the Nazis, and friendly infantry attacks, supported by tanks, completed

the job. Firstly, a strong group of militia submachine gunners, who made their way to the enemy's location at night before the attack, brought great benefits,

A

secondly, the cavalymen of such a combat general as Pliev, who advanced to the flank and almost to the rear of the Nazis.

True, the heroes of the cavalry themselves found themselves in a difficult situation, because after the completion of the

operation they had to fight their way back. But they were not the first to fight behind enemy lines, and they did their job with honor.

The defeat of the Nazi troops occupying Skirmanovo and other villages was complete. The 10th German Panzer Division, which

was intended to intercept the Volokolamsk Highway, rolled back with heavy losses. On the battlefield, the enemy left up to fifty lined

and burned

tanks, many guns, up to 150 mm guns, mortars, hundreds

cars."

Before the start of the last German offensive on Moscow, as part of the 16th Army, according to words

Rokossovsky, included "the 17th, 20th, 24th and 44th cavalry divisions (each 3,000 people) that arrived from Central Asia", which made up the second echelon

of defense. At the same time, "the horses turned out to be not reforged for winter, and in the Moscow region the ground was already frozen, ice

appeared in the wetlands, and this made it difficult for the cavalry to move. Soldiers and division commanders did not yet have

skills of action on rough and wooded and swampy terrain. In addition, the 78th Rifle Division of Colonel Afanasy Pavlantievich Beloborodov, who arrived from

Siberia, entered the army. According to Beloborodov's memoirs, Rokossovsky told him: "To knock out tanks from the Germans is our main task." And Konstantin Konstantinovich also said: "Your reserve is your maneuver. Do not rush to deprive yourself of maneuver.

This is where the counterstrike had to be made. Rokossovsky recalled:

"Unexpectedly, an order was received from the commander of the Western Front - to strike from the area north of Volokolamsk against the

Volokolamsk enemy grouping. The preparation period was determined by one night. Frankly, it was not clear to me what the commander was guided by when

giving such an order. We could allocate few forces, there was no time for preparation, the enemy himself was ready to move on us. My request to at least

extend the preparation period was not accepted in

attention.

As was to be expected, the private counterattack, launched on November 16 on the orders of the front, was of little use. At first, taking advantage of the surprise, we

even managed to wedge three kilometers into the location of the German troops. But at this time they launched an offensive on the entire front of the army. Our

advanced units had to hastily return. It was especially difficult for the equestrian group of L. M. Dovator. The enemy attacked her from all sides.

Only thanks to their

mobility and ingenuity of the commander, the cavalry escaped and avoided complete encirclement.

While still preparing for this operation, we moved the army command post to Teryaeva Sloboda. German aircraft bombed us here thoroughly. The operational

and intelligence departments suffered greatly.

In fact, the troops of the 16th Army launched a counteroffensive on November 15, but suffered

failure. On that day, Rokossovsky threw into the attack the 58th Panzer Division, which had just arrived from the Far East and did not have time to conduct reconnaissance of the area and the location of the enemy. We had to advance through the swamp, many tanks got stuck, out of order, the rest were shot from camouflaged artillery positions. As a result, the division irretrievably lost 157 tanks.

out of 198 and 1731 people killed and wounded - a third of the personnel. Rokossovsky in everyone accused the division commander, Colonel Kotlyarov, who, unable to stand it, shot himself, leaving

suicide note to his second in command: "General disorganization and loss of control. The higher headquarters are to blame. I

don't want to be responsible for bullshit. Move back, Yamuga, behind the anti-tank obstacle. Save Moscow. Ahead without

prospects. In his memoirs, Rokossovsky only mentioned in passing: "We received ... the 58th Panzer Division almost completely without combat technology."

But a division arrived with two hundred tanks, but after its first and last attack, undertaken on the reckless order of the commander, it really was left without equipment.

The attack carried out at the same time by two cavalry divisions, the 17th and 44th, on the dig in

German infantry and tanks ended even more tragically. A description of this battle has been preserved in the combat journal of

the German 4th Panzer Group: "... I could not believe that the enemy intended to attack us on this wide field, intended only for parades ... But then three lines of horsemen moved towards us. Horsemen with shining blades rushed to the attack across the space

illuminated by the winter sun, bending down to the necks of their horses... The first shells exploded in the midst of the

attackers... Soon a terrible black cloud hung over them. People and horses torn to pieces take off into the air ... It is difficult to make out where the riders are, where the horses are ... In this hell

worn

crazy horses. The few surviving horsemen were finished off by artillery and machine gun fire ... "

The Germans did not believe that the attack would be repeated, but they were mistaken. Again, I will give the floor to the

historiographer of the 4th Panzer Group: "And now the second wave of horsemen rushes into the attack from the forest. It is impossible

to imagine that after the death of the first squadrons, the nightmarish performance will be repeated again ... However, the area

has already been shot, and the death of the second wave of cavalry occurred even faster than the first. Von Bock noted this attack

on November 17 in his diary: "A desperate attack by three Siberian cavalry regiments in the 5th Corps sector was repulsed with heavy losses for the Russians."

As a result, the 44th division was killed almost completely, and the 17th lost three-quarters personnel.

A few days later, already at the front of another army, the 17th division withdrew without an order, unable to withstand the onslaught of the enemy (and how could it defend itself after that crushing defeat?). The commander and commissar of the division were put on trial. There are shooters again! Characteristically,

What

Konstantin Konstantinovich did not judge anyone for an unsuccessful counterattack. An experienced cavalryman Rokossovsky knew well that to send cavalrymen to attack in an equestrian formation in an open area against a fortified enemy means dooming them to certain death. Moreover, he himself noted in his memoirs that the horses were not reforged for the winter, and the cavalrymen did not have

skill

operations in wooded and swampy areas. Of course, Zhukov put pressure on him, but still the fault

Konstantin Konstantinovich was here.

The 16th Army launched an offensive at 10 am on November 16 on its right flank. But the German command at the same time launched an attack on the left-flank formations of the Rokossovsky army with the forces of the 5th Panzer Division. The German strike came end-to-end between the 316th Infantry Division and the Dovator Cavalry Group. The German side, unlike Rokossovsky's divisions, was a serious success. It was then that the Germans managed to defeat the division of I.V. Panfilov at the Dubosekovo junction.

On November 16, Bock wrote in his diary that "the 9th Army reported that the 56th Corps, which attacked today, had advanced as far as Lama." The famous battle of 28 Panfilov guards at the Dubosekovo junction, in which they allegedly destroyed 18 German tanks, the Germans simply did not notice either this or the following days. In fact, on November 16, the 4th company of the 1075th rifle regiment, which was defending at Dubosekov, numbering 120-140 fighters, was almost completely destroyed, having managed to damage no more than 5-6 enemy tanks, and the 1075th was defeated and, having lost 400 people killed, 600 people missing and 100 people wounded, retreated in disarray. 20-25 people survived from the 4th company, led by the commander, Captain Gundilovich (he would die six months later). Neither Panfilov nor Rokossovsky anything about the feat of 28 Panfilov heroes in their reports

didn't write.

This case was invented by newspapermen, and then it acquired the status of a fact; 28 names of the soldiers of the 1075th regiment were even randomly chosen, who were posthumously awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. This newspaper myth was repeated in a description published in 1943 under the heading "secret"

Moscow battle, performed in the Soviet General Staff. Subsequently, it turned out that

some of them never participated in the battle on November 16, 1941 at the Dubosekovo junction, while others survived, were captured and even managed to serve in the German police or as "voluntary assistants" in the Wehrmacht. But this is a completely different story, far from heroic.

Just on November 16, Zhukov and Bulganin petitioned the Headquarters to transform the 316th Rifle Division into a Guards Division and award it the Order of the Red Banner for successful battles on October 20-27 near Volokolamsk, in which Panfilov's fighters allegedly destroyed up to 80 enemy tanks and several infantry battalions. Therefore, it would be out of hand to report on the unsuccessful battle of division units on the same day, November 16th. In addition, Panfilov himself died a day later, and to tie him up

the name with the defeat was inconvenient, especially since it was immediately assigned to the 8th Guards DIVISION.

All subsequent days, the 16th army of Rokossovsky retreated with battles. The Military Council of the Front on November 21, in its directive, assessing the especially serious situation that had arisen, characterized it as follows:

"The struggle for the approaches to Moscow over the past six days has assumed a decisive character. The enemy is straining his last efforts for six days, having collected reserves, and is conducting an offensive on the front of the 30th, 16th, 5th and 50th armies. The experience of the struggle for six days shows that the troops understand the decisive meaning ongoing fierce battles. This is evidenced by the heroic resistance, turning into fierce counterattacks of the valiantly fighting 50th and 53rd cavalry divisions, the 8th guards and 413th rifle divisions, the 1st guards, 27th and 28th tank brigades and other units and connections. However, there were facts of violation by individual commanders of the well-known order on a categorical, under pain of immediate execution, prohibition of unauthorized withdrawal from

positions occupied. Such a shameful fact was allowed by the commanders and commissars from the 24th Cavalry Division. Now that the struggle for Moscow has entered a decisive stage, unauthorized leaving positions is tantamount to betrayal and treason to the motherland ... "

Already on that day, von Bock seriously doubted that his troops would be able to take Moscow. That day he wrote in his diary:

"In general, the attack is somewhat watery, and it clearly lacks depth. Based on the number of divisions involved in it in a purely theoretical aspect, the balance of power is now

no less
favorable than it used to be. But in practice, taking into account the sharp

drop in the combat effectiveness of troops - in some companies only 20-30 people remained, - severe

losses among line officers, as well as the excessive stretching of units along the front and the onset of cold weather, a completely different picture appears before us. Nevertheless, despite everything, we are still able to cut off and surround several enemy divisions in the west.

from

Istra reservoir. It is doubtful, however, that we have succeeded in advancing further. The enemy, naturally, will pull everything he still has to Moscow. However, my troops are currently incapable of concentrated powerful attacks.

On November 23, the chief of staff of the Western Front, N. D. Sokolovsky, ordered the headquarters of the 16th Army

to organize a counterattack by the Dovator group on the rear of the enemy operating against Solnechnogorsk.

On the night of November 24, Klin was occupied by the Germans. Part of the troops of the 30th Army defending it was

surrounded. Rokossovsky's former driver Sergey Ivanovich Mozzhukhin

recalled:

"In November 1941, we escaped by car from the burning Klin, into which fascist tanks had already entered.

Everything

was. I knew one thing: no matter what happened, it was necessary to keep the car in good working order

and protect the commander

at all costs. How many times have we escaped death! We spent the night in the car - he was in the back, I was in the front.

On November 24, Bock noted in his diary: "The 46th Panzer Corps has reached the Istra reservoir. In the south of Solnechnogorsk,

the enemy is putting up fierce resistance. The 126th rifle division, the remnants of the cadet regiment, the 25th and 31st

tank brigades managed to break out of the encirclement. Waging fierce battles on November 25 and 26

with the 106th

Infantry and 2nd Tank Divisions, they retreated to the Boriso-Glebskoye, Tolstyakovo, Timonovo line.

As the Germans approached the Istra reservoir, its outlets were blown up, resulting in a water stream up to 2.5 meters high for up to 50 kilometers south of the reservoir. Attempts by the Germans to close the spillways were unsuccessful.

Rokossovsky proposed to withdraw troops behind the reservoir in advance in order to prepare defenses behind this impressive

water barrier. However, Zhukov forbade the withdrawal.

On this occasion, Rokossovsky wrote in his memoirs:

"Having carefully thought over everything and comprehensively discussed the plan that arose with his assistants, I introduced him to the Commander-in-Chief of the front. He asked to be allowed to withdraw troops to advantageous line, not waiting for the enemy to forcefully overturn the defending troops with difficulty and cross the river and the reservoir on his shoulders.

The commander did not take into account all the expediency of my request and ordered not to step aside ... Such an expression, by the way, became fashionable at that time. And most often it

was pronounced by those persons who, being far from the events, did not see and did not know how they develop, where and under what conditions this or that battle takes place. It is necessary to fight to the death and die wisely only when this achieves an important goal, only if it, the death of the few, prevents the death of the majority, ensures the overall success. But in this case, such a need did not exist, and the commander of the front, General of the Army G.K. Zhukov, was wrong.

I quote literally the contents of Zhukov's short but formidable cipher: "I command the troops of the front! I cancel the order to withdraw troops from the Istra reservoir. I order you to defend on the occupied line and not to retreat a step back.

It looked like Zhukov. In this, his disposal was felt: I am Zhukov. His personal "I" very often prevailed over common interests.

I cannot keep silent about the fact that, both at the beginning of the war and in the Battle of Moscow, it was not uncommon for higher authorities not to take into account either the time or the forces to which they gave orders and orders. Often such orders and instructions did not correspond to the situation at the front at the time the troops received them, often they expressed a desire that was not supported by the capabilities of the troops.

It looked like a desire to protect oneself (who gave such an order) from possible troubles from above. In which case, the troops were blamed for allegedly failing to fulfill the order, and the "strong-willed" document was left for a justification certificate with the chief or his headquarters. How many troubles these "volitional" orders brought to the troops, how many unjustified losses were suffered!

The troops removed from the Istra positions, who received the order of the army to take up defense near Solnechnogorsk, with

in order to hold back the advance of the enemy towards Moscow, they were transferred to the indicated area by a forced march. But already on the way, by order of the front, they were changed

task: instead of defense, they received an order to advance and dislodge the enemy from Solnechnogorsk. This episode is a prime example of the mismatch between desire and opportunity. On

organization of the onset of time was not given. It began hastily, as the front insistently demanded to advance immediately. At first, our troops had partial success, moving forward somewhat, but then they were stopped and thrown back to their original position.

position.

The enemy managed to bring up enough forces to repel all our attempts to dislodge him out

cities. True, the enemy also failed to develop success towards Moscow.

I note that Rokossovsky never ordered to stand to death, if this decision is not was

the only one possible in this situation. And he never issued such cruel orders as Zhukov's order of September 28, 1941, when he was commander of the

Leningrad Front: "Explain to all personnel that all families of those who surrendered to the enemy will be shot

and by

returning from captivity, they will also be all shot."

The lack of time to organize a solid defense at an intermediate defensive line (Solnechnogorsk, the Istra reservoir, the city of Istra, Pavlovskaya Sloboda)

did not allow the 16th Army to stop the German offensive. On November 26-28, Rokossovsky's troops were shot down

with

Istra border. The advance of the Germans was stopped only at the turn of Kryukovo - Lenino.

The famous saboteur Otto Skorzeny, who then served in the SS Reich division, recalled, What

SS men

"We had to enter Moscow through Istra - this town was the central bastion of the second line of defense of the capital. I was instructed to prevent the

destruction of the local water supply and ensure its functioning. The church in Istra remained untouched—the shining domes of its belfries could be seen through the mist. Despite the losses, our morale was high. Let's take Moscow! We resolutely moved on to the final assault ... On December 19, the temperature

dropped to -20 degrees. We didn't have winter gun and motor oil, with engine start

arose

Problems. But on November 26 and 27, Colonel Helmuth von der Chevalier took Istra with 24 tanks left over from the 10th Panzer Division and a

motorcycle battalion from Hauptsturmführer Klingenberg's Reich Division. Istra was defended by a selective unit - the 78th Siberian

rifle division. The
next day, Soviet aviation wiped the city off the face of the earth ... To the left and
A little
ahead of our positions were Khimki, a Moscow suburb located only
V
eight kilometers from the Soviet capital. On November 30, motor reconnaissance of the 62nd sapper battalion of the tank corps (4th tank
army) Göpner
drove into this settlement without firing a shot, causing panic among the inhabitants ... "

On December 1-2, the advanced units of the Reich division took the villages of Lenino and Nikolaevo, located respectively 17 and 15
kilometers from
Moscow. But these were the last successes of the SS. On December 9, the division was forced to retreat beyond Istra, and on January
16 - even further, to Gzhatsk.

To destroy enemy tanks and motorized infantry that had broken through into the Lyalovo-Kholmy-Klushino area, Rokossovsky prepared a
counterstrike.

At 5 p.m. on November 28, its parts
started

offensive, but due to the strong resistance of the enemy by the end of the day they retreated to their original position.

The climax of the German advance had arrived. The Germans advanced with all their might.

The Soviet troops had to hold out quite a bit. Their situation was facilitated by the fact that during the retreat to Moscow the front line was reduced
and the battle
formations were condensed. In addition, from

the depths of the country were continuously approached by strategic reserves, some of which the Headquarters had to put into action in the last days
of the defensive battle. And the supply of Soviet troops with ammunition, food and warm clothes, thanks to the developed railway
network of the

Moscow hub, was much better than the supply of German troops, whose cargo had to be transported through all of Poland and Belarus, where on
iron

the roads were increasingly sabotaged by partisans.

On November 29, von Bock, in a conversation with Halder, said that "if we fail to bring down the enemy's northwestern front near Moscow within a
few days, the attack will
have to be called off,
as it is

will lead to senseless oncoming battles with the enemy, who, apparently, has numerous reserves and large stocks of military materials at his
disposal,
and I don't need a second Verdun here."

The main blow was directed against the troops of the 16th Army. November 29 and 30 were heavy

fights. German
motorized units advanced along the Kamenka-Ozeretskoye highway, as well as along the Leningrad and Istra highways. A
formidable order from
Zhukov came from the front headquarters: "Kryukovo is the last point of withdrawal, and it is impossible to retreat further. There is
nowhere else
to retreat. By any, the most extreme measures, immediately achieve a turning point, stop the withdrawal. Every further step you take
back is a
disruption of the defense of Moscow. All command staff from top to bottom to be in units, on the battlefield ... "

Kryukovo, however, could not be kept. Rokossovsky recalled:

"At night - it was at the end of November - the Supreme Commander-in-Chief called me to the HF at my command post in Kryukovo. He
asked if I knew that in the area of Krasnaya Polyana
parts appeared
enemy, and what measures are being taken to prevent them from entering this point. Stalin especially emphasized that from Krasnaya
Polyana the
Nazis could begin shelling the capital with large-caliber artillery. I reported that I knew about the advance of advanced
German units north of
Krasnaya Polyana, and we brought forces here from other sectors. The Supreme Commander-in-Chief informed me that the Stavka had
ordered
that this sector be strengthened by the troops of the Moscow defense zone.

Soon the chief of staff of the front, V. D. Sokolovsky, announced the allocation of a tank brigade, an artillery regiment and four Katyusha
divisions
from the front reserve to prepare our counterattack. To participate in it, we attracted from the army two more infantry battalions with
an artillery regiment
and two cannon regiments of the Stavka reserve. (Earlier, these forces were planned to be transferred to
Solnechnogorsk.)

The collection and organization of troops for such an important matter were entrusted to General Kazakov and

Colonel Eagle. They immediately went to the Black Mud, where the auxiliary control room was located. I followed them there
as well.

It was impossible to drag out the organization of a counterattack. Everything was done on the go. Troops arriving in a forced
march to the Black
Dirt region received a task and, without delay, occupied
positions.

The offensive began in the morning. Our units, supported by heavy artillery fire

And

powerful volleys of "Katyushas", attacked the enemy, not giving him the opportunity to gain a foothold.

The enemy

resisted fiercely, turning into counterattacks. From the air, strikes of his aircraft fell. However, by the end of the day, the Germans

with their tanks were driven out of Krasnaya Polyana and driven back 4-6 kilometers to the north. Together with units of the 16th

Army, the troops of the Moscow Defense Zone participated in this battle "(we are talking about the troops of the 20th Army).

True, a successful counterattack required the use of those forces that were previously supposed to be transferred to

Solnechnogorsk. As a result, the enemy achieved his last success in the Solnechnogorsk direction and occupied Kryukovo,

from where Rokossovsky had to urgently evacuate his command post. The troops of the 16th Army were pushed back to the line of Barantsevo -

Khovanskoye -

Petrovskoye - Lenino. But here the Germans finally ran out of steam.

A. A. Lobachev recalled:

"Our troops withdrew, entrenched themselves at the line: the upper reaches of the Klyazma River - the village of Matushkino -

the eastern outskirts of Kryukovo - Dedovsk.

The enemy made the last breakthrough on November 30, striking between Krasnaya Polyana and Lobnya. It was on this day

that Nazi motorcyclists-scouts visited Khimki. On November 30 and December 1, our units continued to fight tense defensive

battles, but there was a turning point in the situation.

By this time, the enemy strike force had lost at least half of its personnel and

a huge amount of technology. Reconnaissance reported from the division: the Germans were digging trenches, erecting

barriers, hiding tanks in the ground ... "

On November 30, Stalin approved the plan for a counteroffensive near Moscow. It provided

drawing

the main attack by the left-flank grouping of the troops of the Western Front, which included the 16th army of Rokossovsky. The

immediate task of the counteroffensive was "a strike on Klin, Solnechnogorsk and in the Istra direction to defeat the main enemy

grouping on the right wing and a strike on Uzlovaya and Bogoroditsk in the flank and rear of the Guderian group to defeat the enemy"

on the left wing of the Western Front.

On December 1, Bock came to the conclusion that a further offensive was pointless, and sent the following telegram to the commander-in-chief of the ground forces, Brauchitsch:

"The battles of the past 14 days have shown that the "complete annihilation" of the Russian army opposing us is nothing more than a fantasy. To stop at the gates of Moscow, where the network of highways and railways is the densest in all of eastern Russia, means

positional battles against a vastly outnumbered enemy. Meanwhile, the troops of the army group are completely unprepared for this. But even if the impossible becomes possible

and we will be able to initially capture new territories around Moscow during the offensive, I still do not have enough troops to surround the city and seal it tightly from the southeast, east and

northeast. Thus, the ongoing offensive is an attack without meanings

goals, especially given the fact that time is approaching the point of no return when strength

advancing troops will be completely exhausted. <...> I do not know in full the intentions of the High Command of the Ground

Forces, but if the army group is to conduct defensive battles in the winter, this, with its current disposition, is possible only on the condition that

large reserves will be transferred to the front. These reserves should be sufficient to withstand powerful enemy attacks and replace the bloodless troops at the forefront.

But the commander of the Army Group "Center" was well aware that there were no reserves at Brauchitsch's disposal and there was nowhere to take them from, otherwise they would certainly have been given to him earlier to develop the offensive. Now, however, it could only be a matter of maintaining the achieved frontiers, and by no means of taking the Soviet capital. However, the situation in other army groups on the Eastern Front was such that they could not allocate any reserves for von Bock's army group.

The troops of Army Group South had just left Rostov and were struggling to contain the Soviet counteroffensive. There was no way to take any reserves from there. The troops of the Army Group "North" were also connected by battles for Tikhvin. The preparation and transfer of reserves from the West would take too much time, given the state of communications in Russia. In addition, there were no motorized and tank divisions among the divisions in the West (at that moment only the 1st cavalry division was being reorganized into the 24th tank division), and the vast majority of infantry divisions had only limited combat capability. Everything that the Germans could by December 1941 had already been transferred to the Eastern Front from the West.

Thus, in the circumstances, only a retreat from Moscow to more or less prepared defensive positions was real. To such a decision I wanted

push von Brauchitsch
and Hitler von Bock. However, even a clear order to go on the defensive, not to mention

withdrawal, as well as promises to send the requested reinforcements, the commander of Army Group Center did not receive that day.

Meanwhile, the weather intervened. German military historian Werner Haupt writes:

"On November 30, the weather was favorable. On December 1, a snowstorm began. On the following nights, the thermometer fell

to minus 34 degrees, during the day the temperature was below 20 degrees below zero. This offensive was finally buried.

From that moment on, the cold became an enemy more terrible than the Russians ... Field Marshal von Bock in the

4th Army zone ordered to equip a forward command post. In these critical days, he wanted to be with his soldiers.

Losses were high. The number of frostbite far exceeded the number of wounded. The losses of officers were

especially high. In the 7th Infantry Division, the regiments were already forced to command the chief lieutenants!

On December 2, the left-flank divisions of the 16th Army, in cooperation with the 5th Army, pushed the enemy back from the large bend of the Moskva River northeast of Zvenigorod. On the same day, Bock, with his last strength, tried to break

the resistance of the Soviet troops, encouraging himself with the thought that it was about to collapse. On December 2, he

wrote in his diary: "There is only limited progress north of the highway. The paths of advance of the 3rd Panzer Group lie in a

swampy area, which is also heavily mined. For this reason, the 3rd Panzer Group moves forward very slowly. Here and

there the enemy withdraws his divisions, which find themselves in front of its attacking front. But he managed to bring

in fresh forces, albeit small ones, against the flank of the 3rd Panzer Division near Yakhroma. The enemy understands where he

is in real danger - what a pity that I do not have large reserves at hand! In the evening, telexes were sent to all the

headquarters of the attacking corps, indicating that the enemy was definitely in a state of acute crisis, which must be

exploited wherever possible. True, I have certain doubts about the fact that our

units that are at the limit of their capabilities will be able to implement this proposal. But since there was no order to go on the

defensive, the commander of Army Group Center, as a disciplined

Prussian officer, tried to continue the offensive, although he was aware that it had already lost its strategic goal.

The position of the German troops on the eve of the Soviet counter-offensive in the study of the Soviet

The General Staff "Battle for Moscow" was defined as follows:

"On December 1, 2 and 3, the troops of the 16th Army fought fierce battles with the main enemy grouping advancing in the Solnechnogorsk direction along the Leningrad highway and in the Istra direction along the Volokolamsk highway ... At that time, fighting on the front of the 16th Army was extremely tense. Some items changed hands. During December 2 and 3, the enemy managed to capture Kryukov, where the fighting took place on the streets, by means of extreme exertion of forces and means.

The headquarters had to use the strategic reserves that had arrived near Moscow to repel German attacks. So, on December 2, the newly formed 20th Army of General A. A. Vlasov, which carried out a private operation to capture Krasnaya Polyana, received an order from the headquarters of the Western Front from December 3 to launch a general offensive against Khimki and Solnechnogorsk.

It is worth mentioning here that, since later General Vlasov went over to the side of the Germans and created the collaborationist Russian Liberation Army (ROA), the role of the 20th Army in the battle for Moscow was constantly diminished. In particular, the liberation of Krasnaya Polyana in some writings began to be attributed to the 16th army of Rokossovsky, and not to the 20th army of Vlasov, as it was in fact. In order, so to speak, to "rehabilitate" the fighters and commanders of the 20th Army, the former Chief of Staff of the Army, General L. M. Sandalov, put forward the theory that Commander Vlasov

"Before the liberation of Volokolamsk, he essentially did not command the army. He declared himself ill (he can't see well, he can't hear well, his head is breaking from pain). Before the operation, he lived in a hotel

TsDKA, and then he was transported from one army command post to another under the protection (?) of a doctor, nurse and adjutant. They were not allowed to approach him (did Andrei Andreevich really have such a contagious disease? Sandalov claimed that he had inflammation of the middle ear, and such a disease is not contagious. - B.S.). I sent all documents for signature to Vlasov through his adjutant,

and he brought them signed without a single correction. For the first time, I, and other staff officers, saw Vlasov - in Chismen (near Volokolamsk). And I made the first report to him only in Volokolamsk. Therefore, from the beginning of the operation until the army left for Volokolamsk, I

together with

Deputy Army Commander Colonel Litzyukov A.I. (later he commanded a tank army and died in battle) and a member of the Army Armed Forces, divisional commissar Kulikov P.N.

I had to direct the actions of the army troops directly myself.

This is nothing more than a legend, designed to make it possible to quote in the open press the orders signed by Vlasov (of course, without mentioning the name), and in a positive context

characterize the plans and actions of the army command. In fact, Vlasov commanded the 20th Army from the very first day and did not live in any hotels in the CDKA (whoever it was for him allowed in

the height of the fighting!). Already on December 13, he was mentioned in the summary of the Soviet Information

Bureau in the list of Soviet generals who distinguished themselves in the battle of Moscow (there was also mentioned

Rokossovsky). And on December 16, at the CP, Vlasov was interviewed by the American journalist L. Lesuer. It turns out that he was able to somehow break

through the blockade ring, as if created around the commander by doctors and adjutants. Finally, in the archival files of the 20th Army, stored in

Central archive of the Ministry of Defense in Podolsk (fund 373, inventory 6631), there are enough orders for the army from the beginning of December 1941, and the authenticity of his signature under them is not causes

without any doubts. Among them are orders for a categorical ban on executions. prisoners of war

the enemy, as well as the inadmissibility of submitting false reports and information about

trophies.

Vlasov's orders, as well as the actions of the 20th Army under his command, prove what he

possessed military abilities and commanded no worse than the same Rokossovsky and Govorov and clearly better, for example, the commander of the 10th

Army F.I. Golikov, whom Zhukov removed from command for indecisive actions near Sukhinichi. And, no doubt, like Rokossovsky and dozens of other Soviet generals and marshals, Vlasov strove for a successful military career.

The whole fundamental difference between Vlasov and Rokossovsky was in moral principles. Andrei Andreevich was ready to make a career at any cost. And therefore, having fallen into German captivity at a time when Germany's victory in the war seemed very likely, Vlasov made a bet on becoming the ruler of Russia conquered by Germany. AND

naturally lost.

Rokossovsky, once having gone to the service of the Bolsheviks, never changed this oath, even after he served two and a half years in prison on an

unjust charge. Having believed in Stalin, having convinced himself at some point that everything bad in the country happens apart from and against

his will, Konstantin Konstantinovich served him faithfully.

Subsequently, already with the Germans, Vlasov said more than once: "Do you think that such a person as, for example, Marshal Rokossovsky, forgot

about the teeth that he was knocked out in prison during interrogation?" Probably, Andrey Andreevich heard such judgments from Konstantin

Konstantinovich during the Battle of Moscow, when their armies closely cooperated and commanders often met with each other. Yes, and earlier, Vlasov and Rokossovsky probably knew each other when both commanded mechanized corps before the war in the Kiev Special Military District

and were supposed to meet at district training camps of the highest command staff. It seems that Vlasov seriously cherished the hope of attracting

Konstantin Konstantinovich to cooperation, and even sent his emissaries to him, who, however, preferred to surrender to the NKVD. One of them, the former battalion commissar Iosif Yakovlevich Kernes, who was captured almost simultaneously with Vlasov, in the summer of 1942, in

captivity, pretended to be a participant in a military conspiracy, in which prominent Soviet military leaders were allegedly involved. On December 27,

1942, Kernes was sent across the front line with the following funny letters to Marshal Timoshenko and Chief of the General Staff Vasilevsky:

"Berlin, December 16, 1942.

Mr. Marshal Timoshenko.

The proposals of your opposition group regarding a separate peace with Germany, transmitted by Mr. Kernes, were taken into account with interest. However, there are no sufficient powers for Mr. Kernes, as well as data on opposition forces. The connection of Messrs.

Shaposhnikov, Kuznetsov, Rokossovsky, Potemkin, Melnikov and Mekhlis with the direction represented by Mr. Vasilevsky would be desirable.

Mr. Kernes will report on this orally. Your authorized representative is expected to be sent to continue negotiations with

specific proposals.

Kroeger, General.

"To Alexander Vasilyevich (in reality, Vasilevsky's name was Alexander

Mikhailovich. - B.S.) Vasilevsky.

Alexander Vasilyevich! I am pleased that my first opportunity has reached you. I'm interested in your point

point of view on the second point of my suggestions, since you don't say anything in your second messenger's answer. It is extremely interesting with the artels of

Meretskov, Merkulov and Pervukhin. Strange people. This is not the time to talk about rights when you should only talk about duties. Is not it? Kernes will provide

you with password links with my branch closest to you, and my contact will inform you about the progress of our work ... You ask whether to focus on the role of Boris

Mikhailovich? I do not advise. Outdated and out of favor. Glory to Russia! The head of the RSNP (Russian Social-National Party. - B.S.) is Major

General (brigade commander) I. Bessonov.

Kernes was secretly told that a Russian national government headed by Vlasov would soon be created in Smolensk, so a military coup in Moscow should not be forced yet. Obviously, it was about the Smolensk signed by Vlasov on December 27, 1942

an appeal on behalf of the "Russian Committee", which "calls on the Russian people to rise up in the fight against hated Bolshevism, create partisan liberation detachments and turn their weapons against the oppressors of the people - Stalin and his henchmen." Probably Vlasov and

his

comrades-in-arms hoped that the creation of a Russian national government would soon follow, but this did not happen until November 1944, when the stillborn "Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia" was born.

Later, during interrogations in Smersh, and then in the NKGB, Kernes honestly admitted that he had invented an anti-Soviet military organization in order to be able to return to his own. After all, as a Jew, he could be shot at any moment, and it was not easy to hide his Jewishness for a long time. Chekists believed

Kernes and none of the military leaders mentioned in the letter,

including

Rokossovsky was not questioned about a possible conspiracy. Joseph Kernes himself, however, was sentenced to 15 years in the camps.

But back to the Moscow battle. On December 2, Zhukov reported to Stalin and Shaposhnikov: "Today, on all sectors of the Rokossovsky front, the enemy conducted stubborn infantry attacks. The attacks were supported by tanks. Parts of Rokossovsky repulsed all attacks. Tomorrow morning

begin

counterattack of the grandfather's enemy grouping. 79 tanks, 3 divisions of the RS, up to 100 guns were brought up to the attack area. The counterattack is carried out by the 9th Guards Division, reinforced by the 40th

rifle brigade.

Part of the forces helps 18th division. Aviation will be brought in."

The 354th Rifle Division, which arrived in the Skhodnya area from the Stavka reserve, was included in
compound

16th Army. On the morning of December 3, she went on the offensive and by 4 p.m. reached the southern
outskirts

of Matushkino (3 kilometers east of Alabushev). Parts of the 7th and 8th Guards Rifle Divisions fought fierce battles
with

enemy infantry and tanks for the capture of Kryukov. Parts of the 18th Infantry Division were advancing from

Brekhov by the same time. The 9th Guards Rifle Division fought fierce battles with enemy infantry and
tanks on the eastern
outskirts of Nefediev.

On December 4, Bok stated that

"Enemy pressure has increased significantly in the area of the Moscow Canal and in the south-west of Yakhroma.
Here the

enemy also brought fresh forces into battle - a division from central Russia and a mixed

brigade - as a result of which we had to go on the defensive. Since the 3rd Panzer Group had no reserves left at all,
in the

Klin area I brought into action the 900th brigade (the number does not exceed the composition of a
reinforced battalion), which used

to be in the second line of the 9th Army. The weather is very cold."

During December 4, the troops of the 16th Army continued to defend with their right flank, and gradually developed
the offensive

in the center and on the left flank, overcoming the fierce resistance of the enemy.

The main efforts were aimed at mastering Kryukov. The blow was delivered at the junction of enemy
groupings.

The German attack on Moscow finally stopped, and this was a considerable merit of the 16th Army. The work of
the Soviet

General Staff "The Battle for Moscow", published in 1943, contained a very flattering conclusion for

Rokossovsky: "The 16th

Army, which held back the main attack of the northern group of Germans, despite the wide front and the disunity of
its units, as a

result of the firm leadership of the command and courage of the personnel showed examples of
perseverance, art and

courage in battle. At the decisive moment of the battle in the zone between the 30th and 16th armies,

where are the Germans

they drove their wedge, fresh reserve 1st and 20th armies entered the business. They, along with the troops of the first line, stopped the Germans and forced them to go on the defensive.

During the German offensive on the 16th Army in the last period of the defensive battle of the unit

armies withstood (from | to 5 December) continuous and fierce attacks of four tank

enemy divisions (2nd, 11th, 5th and 10th), advancing with at least 300 tanks on a front of 30-40 km. However, despite the fact that the 16th Army was able to oppose

only 86 tanks (as of November 20), the Germans failed to achieve decisive success and break through our positions ... Deep autumn, short days, long dark nights and

Subsequently, the cold limited the conduct of operations, hampered the broad maneuvering actions of the troops, gradually tying the latter to settlements. These

conditions had an unfavorable effect on the material support of the advancing troops. Barriers used by our troops during the withdrawal

Also

played a significant role in slowing down the advance of the Nazis.

It is worth noting that many German divisions between November 16 and December 5 lost up to 50 to 60 percent of their personnel. In some tank divisions, for example, in the 6th, there were almost no

tanks.

On December 12, 1941, the Soviet Information Bureau transmitted the message "The failure of the German plan to encircle and capture Moscow." There, in particular, it was said: "The troops of General VLASOV, pursuing the 2nd

the tank and 106th infantry divisions of the enemy occupied the city of Solnechnogorsk; The troops of General ROKOSSOVSKY, pursuing the 5th, 10th

and 11th tank divisions, the SS division and the 35th infantry division of the enemy, occupied the city of Istra.

The summary also noted that "during the period from November 16 to December 10 of this year captured and

destroyed, excluding the actions of aviation: tanks - 1434, vehicles - 5416, guns - 575, mortars - 339, machine guns - 870. German losses during this

time amount to over 85,000 killed. German losses, both in men and in equipment, were here, as usual, exaggerated several times over. According to

Halder's diary entries, the total losses of the ground forces between November 6 and December 10 were 88,970, including 67,719 wounded, 17,618 killed and 3,633

missing. Now they turned out to be 1.7 times less than in the period from September 26 to November 6, when the German ground forces in the East lost 151,138

people, including

including 31,850

killed and 5,162 missing. In average daily terms, the decrease was 1.4 times. It happened due to the fact that in the first half of November the troops of Army Group Center did not conduct active hostilities. The losses of the Soviet troops also decreased significantly, primarily because there were much fewer prisoners.

On December 4, Zhukov issued a directive to the commanders of the 20th, 16th and 5th armies on the transition to the offensive in the Istra direction:

"1. According to all reports, the enemy, acting against the right grouping of the Western Front, has run out of steam and now it is not possible to continue the general offensive without additional preparation. Maybe.

The enemy's actions over the past 2-3 days have been in the nature of active defense on the entire front, and only against the 1st Shock Army is the enemy conducting a private operation to counter the offensive of army units that crossed the canal.

2. Enemy infantry is heavily exhausted and fights unsteadily. Experience of our counterstrike
By

A group that has broken through on the front of the 33rd Army shows that at the slightest coverage and a unified attack by our infantry with tanks, the enemy, abandoning everything, flees in a terrible panic. In this small operation, the enemy threw about 50 guns, more than 50 heavy machine guns, 47 tanks and many

other weapons. The enemy is especially afraid of detours and tank attacks from the flanks and rear.

3. The enemy, according to all reports, does not have reserves, he used them up completely in 18-day battles. Up to 30% of the personnel remained in tank divisions and an average of 40-50 tanks of all brands. The enemy has very few shells and fuel."

Rokossovsky's 16th Army had five rifle divisions, four rifle brigades, four tank brigades, and four cavalry divisions. They had 55 thousand soldiers, 320 field and 190 anti-tank guns, 480 mortars and 125 tanks. The 16th Army was opposed by the 46th and 40th tank corps of the Germans, consisting of two infantry and three

tank

divisions. Only 22 thousand soldiers, 150 field and 140 anti-tank guns, 250 mortars and 130 tanks remained in them. Thus, in terms of tanks, the forces of the parties in the Rokossovsky sector were approximately equal, in terms of infantry, the 16th Army outnumbered the enemy by 2.5 times, and in terms of

artillery and
mortars - by 1.8 times. Rokossovsky's troops had a significantly greater superiority over the
enemy than the entire
right-flank grouping of the Western Front.

On December 4, the 1st and 20th Armies went on the offensive, striking in the Dmitrovsky and Solnechnogorsk
directions. In the following days, the 30th and 16th armies joined them. On December 5, when the Soviet troops
went on
the offensive against the right flank of the 9th German Army and pushed it back 10-12 kilometers, von Bock
was forced to
prepare an order to prepare the withdrawal of the 3rd Panzer Group and the 4th Army from the Nara-Moscow
line to the
line Karimskoye - Istra Reservoir - Senezhskoye Lake - east of Klin. The effect was that the German troops went
over to the defensive too late, on December 4-5, literally a few hours before the start of

Soviet counter-offensive, and did not have time to properly prepare defensive positions on the front lines.

On December 6, von Bock noted in his diary "the powerful attacks of superior Russian forces against the eastern
and especially the northeastern front of the 3rd Panzer Group. The advance of the enemy deep into
the positions
of the tank group was basically eliminated in all directions with the assistance of the last reserves of the
group. But on the
same day, the field marshal had to authorize a withdrawal to the Istra line. Bock acknowledged that
"complaints from parts of the
on
Russian air superiority. Even more often they complain about the lack of winter clothing, the supply of which is
unsatisfactory. Echelons with winter uniforms are constantly late, as a result, even now not all units are equipped
in winter uniforms. The quality of winter uniforms also leaves a lot to be desired."

During December 4 and 5, the 8th Guards Rifle Division fought in Kryukov itself. The enemy, having
concentrated two
battalions of infantry (35th Infantry Division) and 60 tanks (5th Panzer Division), offered stubborn resistance, using
tanks in
ambushes from behind houses, as well as anti-tank guns and machine guns installed in houses and sheds.
As a result of the
counterattack, the Germans managed to capture the MTS northeast of Kryukov, but they could not advance
further.
The fighting for Kryukovo continued until December 7th. At the same time, the troops of the 16th Army fought intense
battles
for the capture of the villages of Klushino, Lyalovo, Nikolskoye, Matushkino, and Rozhdestveno. The Germans
on all fronts
provided
stubborn resistance, turning in separate sectors into counterattacks by infantry and tanks.

The German troops were still holding out, but von Bock had already realized that the battle was lost.
December 7 he

tried to formulate the reasons for the defeat:

"Three circumstances led to the current serious crisis: 1. Autumn mud. The movements of units and the supply of supplies were virtually paralyzed by liquid mud that flooded the roads. As a result, we failed to take advantage of the fruits of the victory near Vyazma. 2. Failure with

iron

roads. Inadequate service, lack of wagons, locomotives and qualified technical personnel. The inability of locomotives, equipment and hastily repaired station facilities to function in the conditions of the Russian winter. 3. Underestimation of the enemy's ability to resist, as well as his reserves in terms of personnel and materiel.

One can agree with this conclusion, pointing out only that without the third factor, the first two alone would not have been able to stop the advance of the German armies towards Moscow.

Bock continued: "The Russians managed to restore the combat capability of the almost completely defeated divisions in a surprisingly short time, brought up new divisions from Siberia, Iran and the Caucasus, and replaced the artillery lost at an early stage of the war with numerous rocket launchers. Today the army group is opposed by 24 divisions - mostly at full strength - more than it was on November 15th. On the other hand, the number of German divisions was reduced by more than half as a result of continuous fighting and disasters associated with winter cold. The combat capability of the armored forces and that

below.

Losses among officers and non-commissioned officers are simply shocking. In percentage terms, they are much higher than the losses among the rank and file.

On the night of December 8, enemy resistance was broken and the Germans began to retreat. Rokossovsky recalled: "By December 8, as a result of an almost three-day battle, often reaching hand-to-hand combat, as well as bypassing the city from the southwest, the enemy's resistance was broken. Leaving Kryukovo and a number of other surrounding villages, the Germans fled to the west, abandoning weapons and equipment. In the battle for Kryukovo, our units captured about 60 tanks, 120 vehicles, a lot of weapons, ammunition and other military equipment. In the village of Kamenka, the enemy threw two 300-millimeter guns intended for shelling Moscow.

The main forces of the army in the Istra direction also went on the offensive. Striking By

to the fascists, who, fortunately for us, had not yet managed to organize a defense, the troops broke the stubborn

enemy resistance and began the pursuit. Deep snow cover and severe frosts made it difficult for us to maneuver away from the roads in order to cut off the enemy's escape route. So the German generals, perhaps, should be grateful for the harsh winter, which contributed to their withdrawal from Moscow with fewer losses, and not refer to the fact that the Russian winter caused their defeat.

On December 9, the 6th Army began pursuing the enemy in the general direction of the Istra reservoir and the city of Istra. In this regard, Rokossovsky created two strike groups: the first as part of the 145th tank brigade, the 44th cavalry division and the 17th rifle brigade to strike in the direction of Zhilino, Maryino, Sokolovo (north of the city of Istra) and the second as part of the 9th 1st Guards Rifle Division, 17th Tank, 36th and 40th Rifle Brigades and the 89th Separate Tank Battalion to attack Istra and further north. The 20th army of Vlasov, with its right flank, sought to quickly and firmly saddle the Leningrad highway and completely capture Solnechnogorsk.

On December 11, the 20th Army occupied Solnechnogorsk, and the 16th Army occupied Istra. The next day, von Bock wrote: "The withdrawal of the left wing of the 4th Army was successfully carried out, although the brave 5th Corps had to repel heavy enemy attacks near Solnechnogorsk. Reports from the front around the breach north of Klin are getting a little more optimistic. My last reserve, an engineer battalion, was placed at the disposal of the 4th Army. He is going to be used

on Lama in as a cover group. The 9th Army received instructions to engage a battalion of the 86th Division behind the right wing of the army at the crossing over the Lama in the Nikolsky area. On the whole, Russian attacks on both sides of Kalinin were successfully repulsed. On that day, Brauchitsch arrived in Smolensk, to whom Bock

stated: "The question we need to discuss is more political than military

properties. The Führer must finally decide how to be an army group: either fight, staying on those

the positions it now occupies, at the risk of being completely defeated, or withdrawing, which involves approximately the same risk.

If the Führer orders to withdraw, he must understand that not all of our troops will be able to reach the new reduced positions in the rear, which, by the way, are completely unprepared for defense, so it is not known whether the weakened parts of the army group will be able to hold these positions. The reinforcements that were promised to me are dragging with

at such a snail's pace that they cannot have a decisive influence on the adoption of an appropriate decision.

On December 12, Zhukov and Bulganin, reporting to Stalin on the results of the first days of the counteroffensive, in particular, noted:

"The 20th army of General Vlasov, pursuing the 2nd and 106th infantry divisions of the enemy, captured the city of Solnechnogorsk;
The 16th army of General Rokossovsky, pursuing the 5th, 10th and 11th divisions, the SS division and the 35th infantry division of the enemy, captured the city of Istra; The 5th army of General Govorov broke through the defenses of 252, 87, 78 and 267 enemy divisions and is developing an offensive in the general direction of Novo-Petrovskoye, Ruza. From this report it can be seen that, compared with its neighbors, Rokossovsky's army had to fight against the most powerful enemy grouping, but she coped with her task with honor.

During the first two weeks of the offensive, from December 6 to 19, on the right wing of the Western Front, the 1st, 20th and 16th armies advanced 70-90 kilometers. 33rd and 43rd armies advancing in the center almost not advanced. On the left wing, the 49th Army had only a slight advance, but further south, the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps and the 10th Army advanced almost 160 kilometers. By that time, the Germans had already been withdrawing to the Istra line for more than a week. Already on December 13, von Bock asked to resign. On that day, he wrote in his diary:

"Unfortunately, my physical condition has recently deteriorated so much that I had to ask Brauchitsch to find a replacement for me, as I don't know how much longer I can stay on my feet, especially considering the fact that I was very seriously ill last year."

The retreat of Army Group Center was a matter of course. On December 14, von Bock noted: "Toward evening, Brauchitsch arrived. He had already talked to Kluge and Guderian and came to the conclusion that

the gradual withdrawal of the troops of the army group to the rear positions outlined in advance on the map is inevitable. Even the center, that is, the main forces of the 4th Army, will not be able to keep their current

positions if the troops to his left and right are forced to back away. Schmundt, who also attended the meetings and listened to all these discussions, telephoned Jodl in order to learn about the decision of the Führer. The Führer announced, at first in verbal form, that he had nothing against

straightening the ledges at Klin and Kalinin; he, moreover, understands that the withdrawal of Guderian's army group is also a settled matter. However, the army group must hold the former

positions without
giving the enemy a single meter of land until the most necessary preparations for receiving troops in rear
positions are completed.

On December 16, Hitler issued his famous "stop order"

"to hold the front to the last soldier ... Commanders, commanders and officers,
personally
influencing the troops, do everything possible to force them to hold their positions and offer fanatically stubborn
resistance to
the enemy who has broken through on the flanks and rear.

Only by this kind of tactics can one buy the time necessary for the transfer of reinforcements from Germany and
from the
Western Front, which I have already ordered. Only when the reserves arrive at the cut-off positions, it will be possible
to think about
withdrawing to these lines ... ".

The order was received by the troops on 17 December. Bock, who from the very beginning of the Soviet
counteroffensive
advocated precisely such an order, commented on it as follows: "Two strict orders were issued: the first is to hold
on at all costs,
the second is to ruthlessly drive to the front everyone who, for whatever reason, takes cover behind the front line ".

In principle, the "stop order" was correct. The troops were to hold their positions for as long as it took to equip a new line
of defense
in the rear and bring up a sufficient supply of fuel to evacuate heavy weapons and equipment. Otherwise, after
the retreat, finding
themselves practically in an open field, and even without heavy weapons, they would have been doomed to death
or captivity.
Nevertheless, the military leaders who failed to organize the capture of the Soviet capital had to become scapegoats.
On December 17, von
Bock was informed that they were ready to send him on leave to improve his health. On the same day, Hitler

displaced

Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch from the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces and assumed his
duties.

On December 12, parts of the left wing of the 16th Army, continuing the pursuit of the enemy, reached the Istra
River, and parts of
its right wing went to the reservoir. We also went to the reservoir
parts

20th Army. Here the resistance of the enemy increased sharply. The Germans destroyed all crossings and blew
up the dam of
the reservoir. Bunkers were equipped on the western coast, from which

heavy machine gun fire. It was not possible to force Istra on the move. One of the reasons

failure was that
artillery, especially large calibers, lagged behind the advancing Soviet
infantry.

Therefore, Rokossovsky and Vlasov had nothing to suppress the enemy's firepower. Only in the evening of
December 15, the troops of the 16th and 20th armies crossed the Istra reservoir. This was preceded by the
following events.

On December 13, a group of Major General F. T. Remizov, sent by Rokossovsky to bypass the reservoir from
the north, reached
the Gorki line (12 kilometers southwest of Solnechnogorsk), Torbeevo, threatening to envelop the German
units located on the
western bank of the reservoir. She defeated the 111th Infantry Regiment of the 35th Infantry Division and captured 6
heavy guns and other

trophies.

Separate companies of the 354th and 18th rifle divisions managed to cross to the western bank of the reservoir,
but
they were soon driven back to their original position. The group of Major General M. E. Katukov (1st Guards and
17th Tank Brigades, 89th Separate Tank Battalion and 40th Rifle Brigade) acted more successfully. She crossed
the river in the area
of Pavlovskaya Sloboda and by the end of the same day she was fighting for Lukino (8 kilometers south of
Istra). Now the Germans
on the western shore of the Istra reservoir were threatened with encirclement. And they were forced

retreat.

Before the retreat, the Germans released water from the reservoir. As a result, the ice sank to
several meters, and near the western shore of the reservoir, in addition, it was covered with a layer of water of 35-40
centimeters. The western bank of the reservoir was mined by the Germans. Despite these difficulties, on the
night of
December 15, two battalions of the 18th Infantry Division managed to cross to the western bank of the Istra River in
the Nikulin
area. The rest of the division followed. The group of General Katukov, having defeated up to two companies of
enemy
infantry in Telepnev (7 kilometers southwest of Istra), pursued the enemy along the Volokolamsk
highway.

On December 16, the troops of the 16th Army pursued the Germans on the entire front, and by the end of
the day, mobile units
reached the line of Novo-Petrovskoye, Rumyantsevo, Yadromino (10 kilometers southeast of

Novo-Petrovsky), Novo-Daryino (12 kilometers west of Istra). By December 20, they reached the Ruza River
(north of the city
of Ruza). The threat of encirclement forced the German troops to retreat from advantageous positions.

defensive lines. However, as during the November offensive of the Germans on Moscow, this time the attackers failed to encircle a single large enemy grouping. This was explained by the fact that in the conditions of a harsh winter, the advance of tanks and vehicles was difficult, so that the retreating had time to break away from their pursuers and leave the ring, which seemed to be about to close. Yes, and the infantry was forced to move only along the roads, and the fight was mainly for strongholds in villages and towns, which increased the capabilities of the defenders.

In the period from December 17 to 20, the troops of the 1st, 20th and 16th armies pursued the enemy. Vlasov directed the main efforts of his army towards capturing Volokolamsk, ordering in close cooperation with the neighbors on the right (1st shock army) and on the left (16th army) to capture the city by the end of December 17, and by

At the end of December 18, the main forces reach the Shakhovskaya, Andreevskoye, Cherno line. The capture of Volokolamsk was entrusted to the group of General Remizov. However, the Germans stubbornly resisted and the battles for Volokolamsk dragged on. The group of General Katukov from the 16th Army at 9 pm on December 17 from the Denkovo-Rozhdestveno line, together with the group of General Remizov, launched an offensive against Volokolamsk. The fighting continued on 18 December. On the afternoon of December 19, units of the Remizov group, together with units of the 64th Infantry Brigade, occupied Pushkari, developing an offensive against Volokolamsk from the north and from Chentsy from the northeast. By the end of December 19, General Katukov's group was fighting on the outskirts of the city, developing a strike from the Yadrovo, Yazvische area.

At 6 a.m. on December 20, units of the 20th Army - the 64th Infantry Brigade and the group of General Remizov - in cooperation with the group of General Katukov captured Volokolamsk, knocking out the remnants of the 106th Infantry and 5th Tank Divisions from there and capturing rich trophies. A. A. Lobachev described

liberation of the city: "To bypass the Istra reservoir from the north and from the south, a maneuver was undertaken by mobile groups. The group of General Remezov bypassed the Istra position on December 17 and, together with units of the 20th Army, created a threat to the enemy from the north. The group of Major General Katukov, having bypassed the Istra position, crossed the river in the sector of the 5th Army

and hung over the enemy from the south. The tankers brilliantly completed the task and already on the evening of December 17 they moved around Volokolamsk. As in the Istra reservoir, the commander forbade tank formations to get involved in frontal battles with the enemy and attack strong points in the forehead. On December 19, in the morning, when it was not yet dawn, fighting began in the city. ahead

tanks moved, followed by
submachine gunners. The Nazis fired from attics and cellars. But fire
gradually subsided:
the enemy left the city under the cover of darkness.

By the end of December 21 and in the first half of December 22, the 1st, 20th and 16th armies reached the line of the Lama and Ruza rivers.
The 16th Army advanced on
the entire front, but due to the stubborn resistance of the enemy, it did not have much success. Temperatures of 25-35 degrees below
zero and deep snow made it
difficult to advance. The enemy equipped resistance centers in settlements, created minefields and

other
barriers. As a result, it was not possible to break through the German defense on the move. The fighting took on a protracted character.
Inconclusive attacks on
German positions continued into late December and into the first ten days of January.

By the end of December, Soviet troops near Moscow captured 314 tanks, 517 guns, 35 armored vehicles, 67 mortars, 451 machine guns,
400 machine
guns, 3960 vehicles, 841 motorcycles, 1044 bicycles, 15 radio stations, 1529 rifles, | one million rounds, 35 thousand shells. A small number of
captured small arms shows that the losses in manpower among the Germans were not so

large, as stated in the Soviet reports.

At the end of December, in Directive No. 016 / op, Zhukov noted: "In a number of cases, they continue
take place

frontal attacks on settlements fortified by the enemy, which only leads to
redundant

loss and slowdown. I order you to strictly demand from the chiefs of all

degrees to take the fortified nodes of the enemy, bypassing them and not delaying the advance of the forward echelons of the battle order.

Zhukov decided to concentrate the main forces and means on the front of one army in order to succeed. The choice fell on the 20th Army,
which broke
through the German defenses on Lam and in the second decade of January pursued the enemy in the Gzhatsk direction. It was followed by
other armies of the
right wing of the Western Front. In early January 1942, German troops operated against the 1st shock, 20th and 16th armies, which, according to the
Soviet
General Staff, had 34,100 people, 230 divisional artillery guns and 135 tanks in combat strength.

By decision of Rokossovsky, the army struck with the right flank and by the end of December 24 was supposed to capture the Vnukovo, Baboshino,
Milyatino
line. Cavalry mechanized group

inflicted

a blow to the flank and rear of the enemy at Prozorovo, Lisavino, Staraya Tyaga and further to Gzhatsk. But the attack was not successful.

By the end of December, the combat strength of the army units was extremely small. According to the report of General

Rokossovsky to the military council of the front, "as a result of prolonged intense battles, the 40th and 49th

rifle brigades suffered heavy losses and had in rifle battalions some

dozens of fighters. The troops had to sequentially gnaw through the enemy defenses, capturing individual

enemy dugouts and firing points. The fighting was carried out by assault groups against the identified firing points, which

the artillery also tried to suppress. Rokossovsky's army suffered heavy losses. In some of its divisions, the remaining regiments

were consolidated into one consolidated battalion (354th rifle division). The 18th Rifle Division, which operated with the

18th Rifle Brigade, also suffered heavy losses, which lost 172 people killed, 493 wounded and 7 frostbitten in attacks on

January 3, 1942 alone. On January 5, the 354th Rifle Division and the 146th Tank, 40th and 49th Rifle Brigades had 377

bayonets and 13 tanks (of which only three "thirty-fours").

On January 6, Zhukov ordered: "1. In view of the fact that the 16th army did not fulfill the task of breaking through the

enemy's defense, the task of breaking through is assigned to the 20th army. In this regard, most of the units of the 16th Army

were placed under the command of General Vlasov. The rest were assigned defensive tasks until it became possible

to use the breakthrough achieved in the 20th sector.

army.

In mid-January, the 1st, 20th and 16th armies were to cooperate with the armies of Kalininsky

front to surround and capture the Lotoshinsky and Gzhatsk-Vyazma groupings of the enemy.

The 20th Army, which received additional formations and reinforcements from other armies, was able to make a

breakthrough in the Volokolamsko-Gzhatsk direction. On January 17, Shakhovskaya and Ruza were occupied. A

further offensive was launched on Gzhatsk.

On January 17 and 18, the retreating German troops tried with strong rearguards to delay the advance of the 16th Army at the line of Chernevo, Lapino, Leonidovo, but to no avail. Rokossovsky's troops captured these settlements and already on January 20 fought for

Reptino. The 354th

Rifle Division occupied Terekhovo, Knyazhevo, Ignatkovo, and the 9th Guards Rifle Division occupied Soslavino, Isakovo, Potapovo and continued the offensive in the direction of Myshkin.

On the same day, January 20, 1942, a directive was received from the military council of the front, according to which the command of the 16th army with army units was transferred to a new direction (Sukhinichi); the remaining troops of the army, as well as its sector of the front, were transferred to the 5th army.

Thus, the 16th Army ended the three-week battles in the Gzhatsk direction in its previous composition. It advanced 15 kilometers in the center and 22-25 kilometers along the flanks, with an average advance rate of 3-5 kilometers per day. In fact, the offensive has already fizzled out. The small territorial gain achieved did not justify the huge losses in manpower suffered by the armies of the Western Front. The troops were constantly on the offensive. There was no time to properly establish the interaction of the military branches, to train the replenishment. Rokossovsky repeatedly pointed out to Zhukov the need to stop the offensive, to make a longer operational pause in order to prepare a more effective strike against the enemy. In a fragment of his memoirs, unpublished during his lifetime, Rokossovsky wrote:

"The defensive battle was coming to an end, by this time the enemy in the Moscow direction had used up all his reserves, but could not break through our defenses. The moment came for him to go on the defensive. It was necessary to disrupt this plan, not to allow a foothold on occupied lines, and the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command made a decision in a timely manner.

The troops of the army launched a counteroffensive without any pause. The farther they went

from

Moscow, the stronger the enemy resisted. Even before approaching the Volokolamsk line, the front command began to resort to creating groupings first in one sector, then in another, for which some part of the forces from one army was transferred to another. Such improvisation ensured some local success. With the release of our troops to the Volokolamsk line, it became completely clear that the enemy managed to recover from the blow received.

and what it

defense becomes more organized. Continue the offensive with what we had by that time

forces counting on a decisive breakthrough of the enemy's defense and further development of success was no longer possible. The moment came when our high command also had to think about

capitalize on the gains and begin serious preparations for the summer campaign

1942.

Unfortunately, this did not happen, and the troops, following the order, continued to advance. Moreover, the command of the front was given the task of exhausting the enemy without giving him any respite. This was what was incomprehensible to me. It is one thing to exhaust the enemy with defensive actions, seeking to equalize forces, which is what we did before the transition

V

counteroffensive. But in order to exhaust and weaken it with offensive actions with a clear balance of forces not in our favor, and even in harsh winter conditions, I could not understand this at all.

Our repeated reports to the front command about the dire state of the army as a result of the losses suffered, about the discrepancy between its forces and the tasks that the front set before us, were not taken into account. It was necessary to advance with an effort, pushing the enemy out first in one area, then in another. There was no question of breaking through the enemy defenses. Our

possibilities

exhausted to the extreme, and the enemy continued to replenish his troops with fresh forces, transferring them from the west.

The ongoing offensive of the 16th Army from the Volokolamsk line turned out to be especially difficult.

The enemy made every effort to delay our advance. For this, him

there were formations and units that retained high combat capability. The forces of the troops of one army could no longer count on the success of the offensive, therefore, most often, to continue the offensive in the Volokolamsk direction, the front command attracted several armies. At the same time, one of them, which dealt the main blow, was strengthened at the expense of neighboring ones.

But Georgy Konstantinovich again and again threw into the attacks thinned divisions and brigades. It is difficult to say how much it was his own initiative, and how much it was Stalin's will. It is more likely to assume the latter, because at that time the Soviet troops were advancing on

all

fronts, and not just in the West. And such an offensive could rather have been initiated by Stalin and the Chief of

the General Staff B. M. Shaposhnikov, and not by Zhukov. Although Georgy Konstantinovich was by no means against the continuation of the offensive, he only constantly demanded new reinforcements, additional forces and means. It seemed to him: one last onslaught, and the front of the group would collapse

armies "Center", which had to defend itself in a very unfavorable configuration that developed during the German retreat from Moscow. All this resulted in a bloody massacre for the Red Army.

On January 21, 1942, Rokossovsky was recalled to Moscow. The headquarters of the 16th Army was transferred near Sukhinichi in order to organize an operation to liberate this strategically important settlement and prevent the German garrison encircled there from breaking through.

The decision to transfer Rokossovsky along with the headquarters near Sukhinichi arose from Zhukov because he did not believe that the commander of the 10th Army, General F. I. Golikov, would be able to prevent the de-blockade of the German group in Sukhinichi. January 21 between Zhukov and Golikov took place

rather unpleasant conversation. Zhukov was indignant at the fact that the German group, moving to the aid of the 216th Infantry Division surrounded in Sukhinichi, was able to push the troops of the 10th Army and occupied the villages of Kisheevka and Bryn: "Why are the army units withdrawing without orders and those responsible for this are not responsible laid down by order of the front?.. Is it clear to the Military Council of the army that the exceptional passivity, lack of control, carelessness led to the activity of the enemy with the aim of withdrawing 216 p / d from Sukhinichi and secondly, is it clear to the Military Council that further passive actions of the army, a game in battalions, a game of giveaway

Maybe
unleash events and prevent us from carrying out the main operation of the front?

Golikov tried to justify himself: "The basis of the army's actions all the time were active actions. The complication of the situation on the left flank, with the belated withdrawal of the 322 s / d, which was extremely weakened by the battles near Belev, was caused primarily not by the army, but due to a sharp, almost a month lag

Popov. Large control circles with the generalization of divisions and their great bleeding affected the further course of action ... I want to report on the outline of control

in case the enemy managed to get in touch with the Sukhinichi garrison, although against that's all possible and realistic measures have been taken."

Zhukov was indignant that the army commander admits the idea that the enemy will be able to release Sukhinichi: "If this happens, then the Military Council will not have to organize management, another will take its place, and I condemn your outlines based on uncertainty. With such moods, they only leave in disorder, and victory should not be expected. I tell you this from my personal experience, that the commander who looks back will never succeed

won't have.

In a difficult moment, all members of the Military Council and all responsible workers, up to and including the army commander, must be in the right units and deal with all cowards and alarmists like a commander. Unfortunately, the Military Council of the front cannot see such actions on the part of the command and headquarters of the 10th Army.

Zhukov decided to replace Golikov under Sukhinichi with Rokossovsky. He, however, failed to prevent the deblockade of the German garrison, but captured the city. In Moscow, on the way to Sukhinichi, he and A. A. Lobachev stopped by an old comrade Rokossovsky. Lobachev remembering:

"Viktor Nikolaevich Romanchenko is an old friend and comrade of the army commander. Since 1929 they served in the 15th Kuban Cavalry Division. Rokossovsky then commanded this division, and Romanchenko led the squadron. During the events on the Chinese Eastern Railway, the squadron became famous for dashing cavalry attacks. The working people of Eastern Siberia elected Rokossovsky and Romanchenko as delegates of the KhUT of the All-Russian and UP of the All-Union Congress of Soviets. Konstantin Konstantinovich spoke more than once about Romanchenko and regretted that now this gifted commander is not in the army. Before the war, Viktor Nikolayevich studied at the Frunze Military Academy and from there he was appointed head of the Moscow Police Department. When we were near Kryukov and Istra, Viktor Nikolaevich often came to the front, provided assistance by mobilizing vehicles, and helped people a lot. Even 50-100 fighters at that time were precious support for us. Romanchenko replaced male police officers in Moscow with women and in total

sent up to a thousand fighters to the army; they courageously fought on the near approaches to the capital.

After the dugouts and front-line huts, the comfortable Moscow apartment seemed to us almost like a heavenly abode. The owner was busy at the gas stove. Rokossovsky teased him.

They remembered fighting girlfriends: the wives of Rokossovsky and Romanchenko - Yulia Petrovna and Zoya Alekseevna -

were friends for a long time. Back in the days of the conflict on the Chinese Eastern Railway, when the husbands fought, they went

work as nurses in a military hospital. Viktor Nikolaevich recalled the dashing raids of that time and read the waste to his beloved branch of the army.

"You are right, of course," said Rokossovsky. - The battle song of the cavalry is sung. Now her

application is very limited. In practice, these are guerrilla raids behind enemy lines. We have,

True, there was a moment - do you remember the attack on Teryaeva Sloboda in mid-November? - When

the cavalry could do a great job. And what happened! They gave us four cavalry divisions ... The horses are exhausted and not shod, it hurts to look! And yet they came ... "

It is felt that Konstantin Konstantinovich was very upset by the ill-fated cavalry attack, saw its initial doom, but could not ignore Zhukov's order to counteroffensive. In the army, an order is an order, and it must be carried out.

Rokossovsky recalled:

"The management and headquarters of the 16th Army received an order to move to the Sukhinichi region, take control of the formations operating there and restore the situation. Having handed over our sector and troops to our neighbors, we moved in marching order to a new place. M. S. Malinin led our headquarters column to Kaluga, and we were the SA. A. Lobachev drove to the command post of the front.

Here we were received by the chief of staff, V. D. Sokolovsky, and then by the commander himself. G.K. Zhukov introduced the situation on the left wing. He warned us that we would not have to rely on additional forces, except for those that we would receive on the spot.

"I hope," said the commander, "that you will be able to deal with the enemy with these forces and will soon inform me about the liberation of Sukhinichi.

Well, I took these words of Georgy Konstantinovich as praise addressed to us ...

At the front headquarters we were informed that units of the 10th Army had surrounded the enemy in Sukhinichi. Yes, and in Mekhovaya they told me that the 324th division of General N.I. Kiryukhin was blocking this city. But the division commander, an energetic and sensible man, frankly said at the acquaintance:

"We surrounded them, you know, with flags. I am afraid that I myself will not find myself in a trap ...

... The strike force included the 11th Guards Division of General P.N. Chernyshev and the 324th Rifle Division, led, as already mentioned, by N.I. Kiryukhin. Reinforced them with artillery.

The attack was scheduled for the morning of 29 January. At night, the troops took their starting position. Artillery got into position even earlier and prepared fires.

According to the plan, the guards dealt the main blow. Chernyshev's division was stronger both in terms of numbers and weapons. Perhaps she had more experience than the 324th division, which was supposed to deliver an auxiliary strike.

By the appointed time, everything was ready. I, Kazakov and Orel were at General Chernyshev's OP and were already looking at their watches.

The buzzer buzzed. The division commander picked up the phone and suddenly exclaimed in surprise: "It can't be!" I involuntarily burst out.

There was something to be surprised about: from the regiment, which was closest to the city, it was reported that several residents ran up to them and reported that the Germans were leaving Sukhinichi in a panic. Commander shelf - resolute man - he sent reinforced reconnaissance to the city and already moved a battalion there with two tanks.

And there were minutes left before the start of the artillery preparation.

I did not believe these messages. Usually the Germans stubbornly defend themselves in populated areas, and here is such a city! I also read bewilderment on the faces of my comrades. Kazakov even, grimacing, waved his hand: the next German tricks ...

Whatever it was, but I decided to delay the opening of artillery fire. Kazakov gave the order to the batteries.

The sounds of a rare firefight flew over. Clearly from the city. But the shooting did not intensify. What is there happening?

With every minute, the voltage on the NP increased.

And finally, the call signal to the phone again. All of us involuntarily reached for the apparatus. But they immediately dropped down - you should not interfere with the telephone operator on duty. He reported that the apparatus

they ask

for a commander. Everyone was worried. And now Chernyshev, in a voice broken by excitement, but firmly says:

- According to the report of the regiment commander, the enemy fled from Sukhinichi. Intelligence, battalion tanks and

regimental artillery is already in the city, and the entire regiment is on the way to it.

Involuntarily, everyone who was on the NP burst out with a loud "hurray" ...

In Sukhinichi, the headquarters and administration settled down perfectly. True, the city was visible to the Germans How on

palms and was often subjected to artillery fire. I had to dig cracks, build dugouts, so that the headquarters would suffer fewer losses.

The Germans fired at Sukhinichi at different times of the day and night. We somehow quickly got used to it and, frankly, almost stopped paying attention.

The civilian population treated us very well. But every day there were fewer and fewer residents in the city: the incessant shelling and frequent bombing from the air were very annoying. Our Vasily Ivanovich Kazakov did everything to drive the enemy artillery away from Sukhinichi. He even placed 152-mm howitzers in the city itself, disguising

them in

sheds."

Why did the Germans suddenly leave Sukhinichi? On January 24, just on the day when the headquarters of the 16th Army arrived in Meshchovsk and began to take under its command the divisions of the 10th Army located near Sukhinichi, units of the 208th Army broke through to join the enemy's 216th Infantry Division surrounded in Sukhinichi infantry and 18th tank divisions. Rokossovsky was not to blame for this, since he had not yet taken command in this area.

Soon the Germans learned about the arrival of the headquarters of the 16th Army near Sukhinichi and were worried this

fact: together with the headquarters, new formations could be transferred here. However, by the time the German garrison left Sukhinichi, the German command already knew that no

no new divisions arrived together with the headquarters of the 16th army near Sukhinichi (although, as we know, army reinforcement units, including artillery, were transferred along with the headquarters), so the main reason for refusing to hold the corridor to Sukhinichi, most likely, was necessity

to counteract the much more dangerous Soviet breakthrough at Medyn.

F. Halder wrote in his diary on January 27, 1942:

“On the front of Army Group Center, before launching an offensive through Sukhinichi in a northerly direction, it is necessary to eliminate the enemy grouping in the area west of the 53rd Army Corps. Restoring the situation in the area of the gap between the 4th tank and 4th armies (the area east of Medyn) is still associated with great difficulties. On January 28, he noted with annoyance that “differences have emerged on the question of whether to keep or leave Sukhinichi. The Fuhrer demands that this point be held until the results of the offensive near Medyn are revealed. From a conversation with Schmidt (2nd Panzer Army), it turns out that indeed Sukhinichi

wanted again
pass. A counter-order has been issued, I hope it's not too late!

But it turned out that it was already too late. The commander of the 2nd Panzer Army, Colonel General Rudolf Schmidt, who was worried about the breakthrough of Soviet troops to Medyn and Vyazma, preferred to leave

Sukhinichi, in order to free up units for a counterattack by reducing the front line in order to cut off the strike force of the 33rd Army of General M. G. Efremov, advancing on Vyazma. On February 2-3, this counterattack was successfully carried out.

Air Chief Marshal A.E. Golovanov wrote in his memoirs:

“From a whole galaxy of military leaders, I want to dwell on the personality of Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovsky. Perhaps this is the most colorful figure of all the commanders of the fronts, with whom I happened to meet during the Great Patriotic War. From the very first days of the war, he began to show his extraordinary abilities. Having started a war in Kiev Special

military
district as commander of a mechanized corps, he soon became

commander of the legendary 16th Army, which glorified itself in the battle of Moscow. How much great was his fame with the enemy, can be judged from the next episode. The commander of the 10th Army, General F.I. Golikov, things did not go well near Sukhinich, which he could not

master. Rokossovsky was sent there, who openly started talking over the radio about his movement to the Sukhinichi region, counting on the interception of these negotiations by the enemy. The calculation turned out to be correct. Arriving near Sukhinichi, Rokossovsky did not have to

organize battles for them, since the enemy, upon his arrival there, left the city without resistance. This is what Rokossovsky was like for the enemy back in 1941!"

But in fact, at that time, the Germans knew nothing about Rokossovsky. His name, for example, is never mentioned in the repeatedly quoted diaries of Halder and Bock. She is hardly mentioned, as are the names of other Soviet generals, in the memoirs of German generals and marshals. Therefore, it is doubtful that the German military leaders in January 1942 knew at all that the 16th Army was commanded by Rokossovsky, and also that the name of Konstantin

Konstantinovich could have

scare.

On February 8, 1942, Zhukov, with his directive, demanded that the commanders of the 16th and 61st armies launch an offensive no later than February 15 in order to defeat the Sukhinich-Zhizdrinsky and Bolkhov groupings of Germans.

Konstantin Konstantinovich stated: "The directive of the front entrusted the troops of the 16th and 61st armies with

the task of defeating the enemy's Bolkhovo-Bryansk grouping. A task that clearly does not correspond to the forces and

means at our disposal. Occupying a wide front of defense, we could not expose it. At the same time, only by creating

a powerful grouping could one count on breaking through the enemy defenses and developing success in depth

and on the flanks of the breakthrough. The offensive of the 16th Army under such conditions did not bring much success.

On February 17, 1942, Rokossovsky received the first letters from his wife since the beginning of the war. In response

he wrote in a letter:

"Dear Lulusik! Finally got a whole bunch of letters from you. All this was passed on to me

personally

Pravda correspondent who visited you. I sit, reread letters and experience a honeymoon. No one can replace you, and

I don't need anyone. Do not be sad, Lulu, cheer up and believe that we will meet with you and again we will live as before. I kiss you,

my bright beam, countless times. Your Kostya, who loves you. February 17, 1942".

Soon, the changeable military fortune almost put an end to the plans of the army commander, and at the same time to his life. On

March 8, 1942, in Sukhinichi, during the 16th Army's private offensive operation to capture the villages of Popkovo and

Maklaki, Konstantin Konstantinovich was hard

wounded by a shell fragment in the back. Here is how he himself described the circumstances of the injury:

"Aerosled with speed and convenience delivered me from under Maklakov to the checkpoint. We had to work on the order on the actions of the troops after the capture of the stronghold. And in the evening we all decided to go to a meeting dedicated to International Women's Day. At our headquarters, as usual, Malinin, Kazakov and several other staff officers worked with me. I had already taken up the pen to sign the order, when a blasting shell exploded outside the window.

The shard hit me in the back. A strong blow ... The words involuntarily broke:

- Well, it seems that it was horrible ... I uttered these words with difficulty, I felt that I caught my breath.

The injury turned out to be severe. By order of the front commander, I was evacuated to plane to Moscow, to the hospital, which then occupied the buildings of the Timiryazev Academy.

In the memoirs of A. A. Lobachev, a description of this dramatic episode was also preserved:

"Sukhinichi, as usual, was kept under fire by the enemy that evening. Explosions of shells on the streets, as it were, emphasized the responsibility of the moment. In a harsh time, people joined the party, consciously taking on the heroic duties of a communist warrior.

The shelling intensified. We moved into the dugout. Suddenly someone tore open the door and shouted: "Rokossovsky is wounded!"

I rushed to the commander. He lay on the floor. Malinin and Kazakov took off his bloody tunic.

"Don't worry, comrades," he said. Everything happened at some instant...

About three minutes ago, Rokossovsky went into the hut of the chief of staff to sign combat orders. A blasting shell hit and exploded nearby. Fragments riddled the frame, one of them hit Konstantin Konstantinovich in the back.

The commander was lifted up and carefully laid on the sofa. Unfortunately, there was not a single doctor at the army headquarters. Chief Surgeon of the Army Vorontsov went to some hospital. I ordered horses to be sent for him immediately.

"Is there really no doctor in Sukhinichi?" Maybe we can find some civilians?

A few minutes later they reported: there is a local doctor, surgeon Petrov, he remained in Sukhinichi during the occupation.

- So what? Experienced doctor? They say he's very experienced.

The surgeon came. On the way he was warned that Rokossovsky was wounded. Apparently he was

Very

thrilled with the trust. Having examined the commander, he said that his heart was good, he would not let him down; a

fragment hit the spine, passed between the ribs, pierced the lung; the wounded must be operated on as soon as possible.

An hour later, Vorontsov arrived and confirmed that

what did you say

local doctor. After consulting, they offered to send Konstantin Konstantinovich to

operation in Kozelsk, in an army hospital.

I reported in code to the Military Council of the front about the wounding of the army commander. A few minutes later there

was a telegraphic inquiry about his state of health.

At 5 o'clock in the morning Rokossovsky was carried out on a stretcher. He was conscious. At parting, each of us wished him a

speedy recovery. I saw that it was hard for Rokossovsky to leave the front, and it was not easy for us to part with him, with our

commander. After all, we became related during these difficult and heroic days! Turning to Kazakov and me, he said:

"I ask you to leave immediately for the troops. It is necessary to ensure the capture of Maklakov, and then methodically

knock out the enemy from the settlements.

And shaking hands with Malinin:

"I am sure, Mikhail Sergeevich, that the headquarters will work like clockwork."

A few hours later, Vorontsov sent a note: "The wound has been cleared. The operation was done in good conditions, in a timely

manner and medically quite competently. Is fully conscious. After

operations will be sent to Moscow.

A. A. Lobachev himself was also wounded on September 7, 1942, and their battle paths with Rokossovsky

finally broke up.

Rokossovsky always remembered his comrades-in-arms, with whom he had a chance to walk along the harsh front-line roads. And he, and many generals with whom he had a chance to fight together, did not sit out in the rear, now and then appearing on the front lines - often due to the imperfection of communications.

That is why they received severe battle wounds, unlike some future front-line writers, who received a slight wound in the left forearm in the very first battle.

or in

little finger of the left hand, and then the whole war was found in spare parts.

Konstantin Konstantinovich sincerely felt sorry for his soldiers and officers, who often put their

life in vain, for the sake of the offensive ambitions of Stalin and other members of the Headquarters. Just during the counter-offensive near Moscow, the ratio of

irretrievable losses for the Red Army was the worst in the entire war. According to all the laws of military art, after the first successes in the battle of Moscow, it was

necessary to suspend the offensive, pull up the rear, bring ammunition,

carefully prepare an offensive, revealing the weakest points of the enemy, and hit one point with a fist, and not with outstretched fingers. But the Headquarters

stubbornly drove the troops forward, not

considering

losses.

Already after the war, when Rokossovsky was resting in the Caucasus, Stalin unexpectedly called him to his

dacha in Matsesta, where he apologized for the fact that the marshal had to spend two and a half years in dungeons. Yielding to an impulse, the leader went out

into the garden and immediately broke two bouquets of roses - for Rokossovsky and his wife. Konstantin Konstantinovich remembered blood for the rest

of his life

on

thorn-wounded hands of Stalin. Probably, later he recalled both the victims of repression and the millions of soldiers whose death was largely on the conscience of the

Generalissimo. At the same time, Rokossovsky simply went cold, realizing that when Stalin apologizes to someone, this usually ends very badly for the addressee of the

apology. But it worked out.

In a part of his memoirs, unpublished during his lifetime, Rokossovsky criticized Zhukov and Stavka:

"The basis of the defense organized by the enemy was the strongholds located in inhabited

points or in groves. The gaps between them were mined and shot through by machine guns,

mortar and artillery fire.

Our infantry, advancing in thin chains, had to advance through deep snow under heavy fire. Very little support was provided to her by artillery, which had a small number of barrels and experienced a shortage of shells. Even without seeing the enemy, that is, long before the attack, our heroic, but exhausted infantry was exhausted and suffered heavy losses.

The front headquarters did not skimp on directives, instructions and instructions that encouraged activities and explaining how to act and quickly overcome enemy resistance in various conditions. These truths were well known to commanders and fighters. All of us, from the private to the general, ourselves sought to expel the invader and defeat him. In addition, those who were directly in the combat formations of the units knew more deeply and in detail what the troops needed and what were the reasons for their slow advance. Instructions were not needed at that time, but the replenishment of formations and units with personnel, weapons, mortars, guns, vehicles, tanks, special engineering equipment, mines and shells ...

The question involuntarily arose in me, and in many others: why did our Supreme High Command, the General Staff, and even the front command continue aimless offensive operations? After all, it was quite clear that the enemy, although repulsed from Moscow more than a hundred kilometers, has not yet lost its combat capability, that it still has enough opportunities to organize a solid defense, and in order to decide on a "crushing" assault, it is necessary to accumulate forces equipped with sufficient weapons and equipment. We did not have all this in January 1942. Why, then, do we not use the time won from the enemy to prepare the armed forces for the upcoming operations for the summer, but continue to wear out not so much the enemy as ourselves in a hopeless offensive? This was a gross mistake of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command and the General Staff. To a large extent, it also applies to the commanders of the Western and Kalinin fronts, who failed to convince the Headquarters of the failure of the offensive, which turned out to be beneficial only to the enemy, who had gone over to the defensive and, following Hitler's directive, was preparing his troops for decisive action in

summer campaign of 1942. This cannot be ignored."

About how expensive the advance was given to the Soviet troops in the counteroffensive near Moscow and how modest the results were in terms of losses inflicted on the Germans, evidenced by the data on the casualties of the parties and their ratio.

Between 10 and 31 December 1941, according to Halder's diary, losses

German

ground forces in the East amounted to 65,825 people, including 10,923 killed and 4,389 missing. This is 1.4 times less than the

German losses in the period from November 6 to December 10, when the last German attack on Moscow took place. However, on an average daily basis, they

turn out to be 1.2 times more than the losses during the period when the German army was advancing. Nevertheless

there is no need to talk about any catastrophic losses during the reflection of the Soviet counteroffensive, even if we take into

account that Halder's data do not cover the sick, and there were significantly more sick and frostbite in December

than in November. Note

what's up to

At the beginning of February 1942, there were 60,977 patients in the German army in the East. Also, a small number of

missing German soldiers and officers (less than 4.5 thousand) indicates that relatively few Germans were captured.

Between December 31, 1941 and January 31, 1942, German casualties on the Eastern Front, according to Halder's records, were

87,082, including 18,074 killed and 7,175 missing. This is 1.3 times more than in the period from 10 to 31 December. However, in

average daily terms, there is no increase in German losses. On the contrary, their decrease by 1.1 times is observed.

There are no reliable data on Soviet losses in November and December 1941, but they were many times higher than the

German ones, especially in terms of the number of killed and missing. Here is just one example: the 323rd Rifle Division of the

10th Army of the Western Front in three days of fighting, from December 17 to 19, 1941, lost 4138 people, including 1696 dead and missing.

This gives an average daily loss rate of 1346 people, including 565 irretrievable losses. The entire German Eastern Army,

numbering more than 150 divisions, for the period from December 11 to December 31, 1941 inclusive, had an average daily

loss rate only slightly higher. On the day the Germans lost 2658 people, including only 686 - irretrievably. Here it must be

emphasized that the overall ratio of losses, taking into account the wounded and especially frostbitten, was relatively more

favorable for the Red Army, where the number of those killed in that period was almost equal to the number of wounded,

while in the Wehrmacht there were 3-4 times more wounded than killed.

Rokossovsky was absolutely right when he proposed to complete the offensive near Moscow at the end of December, after

capturing the Volokolamsk border, and not to try to extend it to the entire

Soviet-German front. The immediate threat to Moscow would be eliminated, and

Soviet

troops would have avoided many needless losses.

But in the Stalinist system of war, the Red Army could only win with great bloodshed. Stalin feared a truly professional army as a potential threat to his unrestricted power. He preferred to fight with untrained reinforcements. Especially

what about

he never found out the real figures of Soviet losses, as well as their relationship with the German ones. When presented upward, data on the losses of the Red Army, as a rule, are significantly

were underestimated, while the losses of the Germans, on the contrary, were exaggerated many times over. Somewhere towards the end of the first year of the war, Stalin and the General Staff began to suspect that the Germans were by no means suffering the losses attributed to them by combat reports. After all, as if the German troops defeated near Moscow were able in the summer of 1942 to launch a new general offensive and push the Red Army back to Stalingrad.

Writer Alexander Beck, in the essay "Strokes", written in hot pursuit, in March 1942, captured his meetings with Rokossovsky during the Battle of Moscow:

"I happened to see Rokossovsky in military units and at the army headquarters at different moments of the battle near Moscow. Most of the time he is silent.

I remember the surviving house in a town near Moscow burned by the Germans - Rokossovsky arrived there the next morning after the advancing army took this settlement. Rokossovsky was sitting on a bare plank bed, comfortably leaning against a corner, wearing a fur

fur

boots, in the same leather coat without insignia. The headquarters of the artillery regiment settled in the house. General Kazakov, the chief of artillery of the army, a very kind and very demanding person, spoke with the commanders. And Rokossovsky silently smoked and listened.

The partisans came - eighteen and nineteen-year-old youths with shining eyes, flushed, in open coats and short fur coats: that day for them was

invisible

thirty-five degrees frost. Smiling and joking, they were questioned by a member of the Military Council of the army, overweight and cheerful Lobachev. And Rokossovsky was still silent, from time to time

another cigarette from a camping cigarette hanging on a belt next to a field bag

And

tablet.

Commanders came in and out; many recognized the commander of the army, asked: "Let me turn," "Let me go?" Rokossovsky silently nodded.

He didn't say a word for two hours. I was amazed, looking askance at him. Is he tired or upset? No, the blue eyes were clear, lively, and looked with interest at each new face.

And maybe he saw, heard, noticed more than anyone else present. But he was silent. His comfortable posture, unhurried movements, calm look, as it were,

testified: here everything is going the way it should go. Then he got up and said:

- Let's go, I guess. Goodbye, comrades. We won't disturb you."

It is striking here that Rokossovsky emphatically did not interfere in the actions their

subordinates. His presence had a calming effect on them. They knew that if such a need really arises, Konstantin Konstantinovich will definitely help them,

suggest the right decision. And on trifles will not interfere. In a rough draft, Beck put it even more clearly: "Gesture — ran his hand through his hair,

checked if the hair was in order. He was silent. Blue eyes. Incomplete smile. He was silent for two hours. He smoked and was silent ... And suddenly it became

clear to me. He is shy. He is a war professional, an army commander, he gets lost in

any

society, except for his own, the military. I know this guy, he has everything here. And here he is a huge force. Indeed, for Rokossovsky, the army was his home. And

only in the company of the military

the commander really opened up. Maybe he really was embarrassed by the presence of a journalist and therefore was more taciturn than usual. And

Rokossovsky never liked to chat.

Further in the essay, Beck gave a detailed psychological portrait of Rokossovsky:

"For the first time I saw Rokossovsky among the commanders who had just been awarded orders. Lobachev, who was sitting next to Rokossovsky, got up and, covering the noise of voices, announced:

- Now Konstantin Konstantinovich will say a few words.

Rokossovsky straightened his hair in embarrassment and blushed. At that moment it became clear to me that Konstantin Konstantinovich was very shy.

Somehow later I told Rokossovsky about this.

"You guessed it," he replied.

Is it not surprising that Rokossovsky, the commander of an army of many thousands, whose name was glorified in the great two-month battle near Moscow, nevertheless sometimes blushes, suffering from shyness.

I don't know Rokossovsky's childhood and youth, I don't know how this peculiar and strong nature was formed, but some impressions made it possible to understand something.

Rokossovsky arrived in a village that had just been recaptured from the Germans. Burnt buildings were still smoking. It was bitter cold. The hazy, seemingly frosty air smelled of burnt grain; this sharp, specific smell - the bitter smell of war - does not disappear for a long time. From under the ashes, the inhabitants dug up buried good. Some were carrying luggage somewhere on sledges, others settled down by the fires with their families and cooked something in pots and buckets. Dead horses were lying about, in some places already touched by an ax. Cartridges were carried in sledges to the front lines; the Red Army soldiers were walking, warmly dressed, flushed in the cold; one group settled down on a halt, heard

harmonic; someone, whistling, squatted; kids rushed in from everywhere.

Here and there lay the uncleaned corpses of the Germans. Hurrying to bury their own, the Germans dumped the dead bodies into the well, threw them to the top, but did not have time to fall asleep.

From the well protruded a dead, ossified hand with twisted fingers, brown from the cold, this corpse was probably lifted from the ground hardened and, thrown from above, remained in unnatural and terrible pose.

Rokossovsky went to the well. Then he turned, looked around and, turning to me, said:

- Do you smell the burning? When you look at all this, historical books come to mind. How fought off the Tatar invasion, as the Cossacks fought. Remember Taras Bulba?

Another time Rokossovsky remembered books, sitting at dinner next to Maslennikov, chief political administration of the army. The conversation was about the battles near the Kryukovo station, which the Rokossovsky army likes to call the "second Borodino".

I say it was! said Buttered, and with force he stuck a large penknife, with which he had just opened canned food, into the wood of the table.

Rokossovsky took his knife out of his pocket, opened it and plunged it in beside him. - I say: not so!

And he added, looking at Maslenov with a smile:

"We are Siouk-Su Indians... Do you remember Mine Reed?"

And I suddenly imagined a shy boy who is shy in public. He keeps aloof, silent, looks, listens. And reads a lot.

Most of all about the war, about the extraordinary feats of extraordinary people. Then he becomes

military. And there, in military affairs, he invests everything he possesses. Warfare becomes his

vocation, his creativity, his ... Rokossovsky himself uttered the word that I was looking for, trying to grab the core of his personality.

== Passion, military passion, - he said, when one day we were talking about the characters of some famous generals.

Such a passion - "military passion" - completely owns Rokossovsky. But even from a young age, it was expressed in him not only in daring and dashing, although all this was, and even in abundance, in his commander's century, which began in a dragoon regiment in the theater of the First World War. He belongs to the military, who are called thinking. He thinks a lot about the problems of the war. In the army, they sometimes say about him: "Thoughtful."

It seems to me that I have caught the rule that Rokossovsky invariably follows. This rule may not work for everyone. It

affected not only the experience and thoughts of Rokossovsky, but also a special warehouse of his character.

The rule in

question was expressed by Rokossovsky at the same dinner when he argued with Maslenov. In addition to them, many of the army

commanders were in the room: Lobachev, Malinin, Kazakov, the head of the rear service, General Anisimov, and others. They

sang "Stenka Razin". The stanza came up:

So that there is no discord
between free people ...

- Holy words! Rokossovsky said. Why saints? I asked. "Because in war everything is done by the team.

- And the commander?

"The commander must always remember this. And select a team, select people. And let them unfold.

- And you? -

He can remain invisible. But see everything. And be a great psychologist."

It seems to me that the main personality traits of Rokossovsky Beck noticed here very exactly.

Marshal's modesty sometimes turned into shyness, especially with strangers and in

large gatherings. And at the same time - the qualities of a good psychologist who knows how to quite

democratic manner to lead the military collective, whose members are accustomed to an authoritarian style of leadership. And the belief that he and his team are free people. Although,

probably, in the depths of his soul, Konstantin Konstantinovich was aware that this was not entirely true. They could feel free at the moment when they devoted

themselves to military affairs with all their passion: they planned operations, made calculations, gave orders, went to the troops. Beck

found

the right word is passion. But Rokossovsky knew very well that Stalin was above them, whose will was law. And between them and Stalin - there is also Beria from the

NKVD. It is unlikely that he now believed that the Chekists could, on their own, without the leader's sanction, execute and pardon military leaders.

And Alexander Alfredovich correctly noticed the genesis of Rokossovsky's military passion. She walked from

childhood, from books read, from Mine Reed and Fenimore Cooper, from popular books about wars and battles, from playing Indians.

Beck recalled:

"Another time I had to watch Rokossovsky work at his command post. The army headquarters had just arrived in a small village. The operational department

was housed in a school that was frozen through, staff commanders worked at their desks. Smoked and not yet warmed

a large stove that has not been heated for a long time. It was necessary to develop a new operation and draw up a combat order for the troops. The chief of staff, General Malinin, an authoritative and intelligent man, entered. There was no big table; a blackboard was placed on the shifted desks; a map was spread on it, glued together from many sheets. The disposition of forces - ours and the enemy's - was already recorded there, as it had developed by that moment. A few minutes later, Rokossovsky appeared along with Kazakov. Everyone went to the map. They joked a little about the neighbor, who, on orders from Rokossovsky, handed over part of his site to the Rokossovsky army (obviously, this happened near Sukhinichi in January 1942, on the eve of the capture of the city by the troops of the 16th army. - B.S.).

- They deprived them of the opportunity to distinguish themselves, to take this town, - said Rokossovsky. - And they rejoiced. Let all the bumps fall on the other.

"Yes, everything is very scattered here," Malinin said, "the enemy can leave, if pressed.

"Of course, we need to gather strength and deal with this group piece by piece.

"I think we need to eliminate this knot first," Malinin suggested.

"Good," agreed Rokossovsky.

This was approximately the conversation between the commander and the chief of staff.

Then the staff mechanism started working. It was managed by Malinin. He was reported on the available number and armament of each unit; he wrote down, counted, found out the details, called the right people, asked questions or gave instructions, clarified information about the forces and intentions of the enemy, then, together with the chief of artillery, began to develop an operational plan; set a task for each connection, indicated the route of movement, the place of concentration, the time of reaching the starting line, the direction of the strike. All this was done thoroughly, without fuss, without haste. An hour passed, another, a third - Malinin with the staff of the headquarters was still preparing a combat order. And Rokossovsky - tall, light, not amassed, despite his 45 (actually 47. - B.S.) years, no belly, no stoop - walked and walked around the room, sometimes sitting down on the lid

desks. He listened and remained silent. And only occasionally with a short phrase slightly corrected the course of the working mechanism.

- The task of reconnaissance is more precise. So that no one gets ripped off. Or:

- Move forward and pull the roads behind you.

And again he fell silent.

The room began to grow dark; there were electricians with a field electrical installation; Malinin, taking the map, moved to the window. Rokossovsky lay down on the vacant blackboard. He lay on his back, staring up at the ceiling with his hands behind his head. His legs hung down, not reaching the floor, and swayed slightly. And again - his free comfortable posture, his calmness seemed to testify: here everything is going the way it should go. Malinin does an excellent job and does not need anything

interfere".

In the description of Beck, Rokossovsky looks very phlegmatic. But, according to the writer, there were moments when Konstantin Konstantinovich violently showed his feelings:

"Several times I saw Rokossovsky angry. Being on the front line, in battalions, Konstantin Konstantinovich did not like his retinue to follow him, he preferred that the division commander, the regiment commander did not accompany him. So it was that day. From the front line, Rokossovsky came to the headquarters of the regiment. The regiment commander reported and began to report on the situation, indicating geographical points on the map. Rokossovsky listened silently, but his face grew gloomy.

- Where are your trenches? he interrupted. The commander showed And suddenly, unable to restrain himself, Rokossovsky shouted: - You're lying! The army commander was there, but the regimental commander was not there! Ashamed!

And, turning abruptly, he left. Everything here is typical for Rokossovsky. He constantly
- V

separate periods daily - leaves the command post in part, walks, observes, speaks little, listens a lot and looks closely, looks at people.

The army control

mechanism is functioning at this time without him. From here, from the combat areas, Rokossovsky knows a lot more, including the quality of the work of his own

headquarters. To subordinates, from young to old, and to himself, he first of all makes one requirement: to tell the truth, no matter how difficult it is sometimes to

tell it. Lies do not tolerate, do not forgive.

On another occasion, he did not lose his temper, did not raise his voice, but spoke very sharply. It was about

losses that could have been avoided by taking one village if the operation had been

prepared more carefully.

- Ugly, uncivilized, careless! Rokossovsky sternly determined. - Why
climbed
without intelligence?

Then, without interrupting, he listened to the answer. Guilty, without looking for excuses, bluntly admitted the mistake.

- Another time I will put on trial for such things! - said Rokossovsky, and both knew for sure that it was so
will be if the error occurs again.

- Take care of every person! the commander continued. - Until you know where the enemy is, what his strength is, you have
no right to
advance! God knows what! When, finally, we will learn how to fight culturally!

I was struck by this phrase: "Culturally fight!" Subsequently, I recalled this many times
expression, thinking about Rokossovsky.

And here is another case. To the front line, which had advanced several kilometers to the west in a day, two
passenger cars slowly
walked, in some places bogged down in shoals of swept snow: Rokossovsky's car was in front, followed by
Lobachev, where I
was sitting. The road was cleared by sappers. Front
car
suddenly slowed down. I saw several sappers sitting in the snow, smoking. Rokossovsky got out, walked
quickly towards
them, and we, in the back car, which also stopped, suddenly heard his angry voice. I opened the door
and caught the words.

- The front needs shells, and you are sitting here pants, heroes!

And turning away, Rokossovsky went back. Even in his gait, one could feel how indignant he was. The cars moved, but
soon stopped
again when the commander ran up to the front. Rokossovsky talked to him for several minutes, no longer raising his voice.
Roads, flat, wide roads - this is constantly and persistently demanded by Rokossovsky from his engineering
department. I can
assure you: I have been, of course, far from all armies, but I had to travel in some places - nowhere have I seen such
good roads as in
the sector of the Rokossovsky army.

It is characteristic that Rokossovsky only threatened to sue where Zhukov would have ordered under

give judgment. And
he scared his subordinates without using profanity. And he never beat them, everyone who knew him testifies to this.

The desire of Konstantin Konstantinovich to "culturally fight" is remarkable. But do
it's in

The Red Army was oh so difficult. Above the generals and marshals was the Supreme Commander, who could shoot each of them. And at
the very base of the pyramid there were millions of poorly trained and even completely untrained Red Army soldiers hastily thrown into battle,
with whom,
with all the desire to fight culturally, there was no

possibilities.

Nevertheless, Rokossovsky tried as best he could to reduce losses, but this did not always work out.

Beck ended his essay on Rokossovsky with the following words:

"In the army, stories are being told of his fearlessness under fire. But he also has a different, perhaps higher, fearlessness—the fearlessness of
responsibility.

Reticence is a feature of his character. He, silent and often seemingly imperceptible, was responsible for everything - for each subordinate, for
his entire team,
for every operation of his army. It is not easy, and perhaps even

impossible

find and name any achievement of the Rokossovsky army, which could be said: Rokossovsky did it, he is alone and no one else. But he is undeniably
worthy of the fact

that the army he commands is called the army of Rokossovsky.

Indeed, the troops of the 16th Army, and then the fronts commanded by Konstantin Konstantinovich, proudly called themselves Rokosovites.

Alexander Beck, one of the creators of Soviet industrial literature, portrays Rokossovsky as, as they would now say, an effective manager,
for whom the army is the

same factory or plant, whose activities must be adjusted in the best possible way. Only Rokossovsky existed in the Stalinist administrative-command
system, and even
when he began to command the front, his capabilities remained very limited. But, unlike many other Soviet military leaders, Rokossovsky at least tried
to "fight culturally."

Rokossovsky has undoubted merit in the fact that on the outskirts of Moscow, his 16th Army managed to hold back the onslaught of the most
powerful German
grouping, against which it then carried out a successful counteroffensive. His name became known throughout the country. He was noticed and
singled out
by Stalin as one of the most promising commanders. The injury did not become a brake on

Rokossovsky's career - soon after his recovery, he was appointed to command the Bryansk Front.

Chapter seven | STALINGRAD FRACTURE

When on March 8, 1942, Rokossovsky received a shrapnel wound in the battle near Sukhinichi, he was urgently taken to a field hospital in the city of Kozelsk, and from there to Moscow. Hospital

located in the building of the Timiryazev Academy. The wound turned out to be severe - the lung and spine were damaged.

Konstantin Konstantinovich recalled:

“While I was being treated, I was able to find my family - my wife and daughter, who were evacuated from the front line at the beginning of the war.

They found themselves in Kazakhstan, and then in Novosibirsk. The secretary of the Moscow Party Committee, G. M. Popov, who visited me, advised

me to transfer my family to Moscow and helped me with an apartment.”

It can be assumed that the editors worked on this place in Rokossovsky's memoirs. In fact, as we already know, Rokossovsky established the place of residence of the family even before start

German attack on Moscow, and received the first letter from the family on February 17, 1942, almost three weeks before being wounded.

Later, this place in memoirs gave rise to legends about the novel by Konstantin Konstantinovich

famous actress Valentina Serova. Meanwhile, even during the battle near Moscow, Konstantin Konstantinovich had a front-line wife - a military doctor of the 2nd rank Galina Vasilievna

Talanova. This pretty young woman of small stature won the heart of a two-meter handsome man, commander of the 16th Army. She graduated from a medical school at the very beginning of the war and was sent to serve in the 85th field hospital, which was in the army of Rokossovsky.

According to the memoirs of Galina Vasilievna, their acquaintance with the future marshal happened as follows. Once, the wounded were brought to Kryukovo, where Rokossovsky's headquarters were located at that moment. Talanova hurried to the trucks with the wounded and did not notice the man walking by

tall military man with general's buttonholes. And he stopped her with a low hail and said, smiling:

"Why don't you salute, comrade officer?"

Later, Konstantin Konstantinovich admitted that when he saw her, a "sparrow" in military uniform, boots, small, fragile, he was shocked. Painfully, she was

similar to his wife Julia - not only in appearance, but also in a light, swift gait. This romance lasted until the end of 1944 and culminated in January 1945 with the birth of Nadezhda's daughter, whom Rokossovsky

registered in his name.

In general, there were many rumors and legends about the personal life of Konstantin Konstantinovich, especially after his death. Charming, with excellent manners, he was very popular with women. And most of all they talked and are

talking about his stormy romance with Valentina Serova. Versions here a bunch of.

We will briefly recount just a few of them.

The former adjutant of Marshal B.N. Zakhatsky stated: "Konstantin Konstantinovich loved his wife very much and was faithful to her. Serova's case is a

special story. And the way it ended once again proves the greatest decency of Rokossovsky and his deep love for the family.

But

in general, it is not worth exploring in detail the intimate moments from the life of such people. After all, the

essence of Rokossovsky is different - this is a great military leader and patriot of Russia. It is in these features that we need to look and take an example.

As for the relationship between Rokossovsky and Serova, it is reliably known that they met in

hospital, which was located in the complex of buildings of the Timiryazev Agricultural Academy. The famous actress came there to perform in front of

the wounded as part of a concert team.

Rokossovsky immediately liked Serova, who was then only twenty-four years old. There is a legend that the very next day, the enamored Rokossovsky sent the

adjutant for the actress directly to the theater. Rumor says that Serova came to the hospital every day and

nursed Konstantin Konstantinovich. Valentina Serova on Malaya Nikitskaya had two whole apartments (her own and her mother's). And when, after being

discharged from the hospital, the doctors recommended Rokossovsky to stay in Moscow for some time for rehabilitation, he settled in the upper

apartment that belonged to Serova, and she temporarily moved to her mother's, on the first floor. And at Rokossovsky, as if from morning to evening, the military crowded. And when Beria allegedly came to Stalin with a report: that Rokossovsky was cheating on his wife with an actress, what are we going to do, Stalin replied with a smile: "What are we going to do? We will envy."

Serova's romance with Rokossovsky allegedly did not last long, three months. It all ended when Konstantin Konstantinovich was informed that his wife and daughter had been found. Rokossovsky became

to go to the front, and they never met again. According to another version of the legend, Valentine

Vasilievna later allegedly went to see him at the front and even to Poland after the war. Another version: I didn't go to

Poland, but when Rokossovsky came from Poland to Moscow, they

met.

There is another version of dating. As if Rokossovsky had already recovered from his injury and went to

theater. Serova came into his box. They started a non-committal small talk, followed by several meetings at friendly feasts. Serova was

very fond of showing off next to the general. Then there were rumors that Serova gave Rokossovsky a watch with an engraving:

R.K.K. from V.V.S. And then, as if there were only letters from Valentina to Konstantin, and unanswered.

It is possible that the rumors about their closeness with Rokossovsky were initiated by Serova herself. The illegitimate daughter of

Marshal Nadezhda Rokossovskaya recalled, referring to Serova's daughter, that her mother told her: "As an actress, they can forget

me, but Hero of the Soviet Union Serov, poet Konstantin Simonov and Marshal Rokossovsky will always be remembered. And my name

will always be with them."

The grandson of Marshal Konstantin Vilyevich Rokossovsky, according to his mother, said:

"For merits during the defense of Moscow, the City Executive Committee gave our family an apartment on Gorky

Street, and when my grandfather was seriously wounded in 1942, my mother and grandmother came to look after him.

Grandfather was wounded by a shrapnel in the back, he was treated in a Moscow hospital at the Timiryazev Academy.

As soon as he was able to get up, he immediately moved home from the hospital and waited for the doctors to allow him to

return to the front. All attempts by doctors to remove the fragment were in vain, but, despite the excruciating pain,

grandfather joked with mother, sang their favorite Russian and Polish songs to grandmother

songs ... No

matter how the situation developed, he always found an opportunity to announce himself. Even flying in for two hours on a call from the Stavka, on the way to the airport he stopped by for at least five minutes at home, he managed to send some food parcels from the front all the time.

In the most common versions of the love of Rokossovsky and Serova, almost everything is wrong. Konstantin Konstantinovich could not finish his treatment in Serova's apartment. After all, already in April 1942 in Moscow he had his own five-room apartment on Gorky Street, and from hospital he

I only got out on May 22nd. Serova could not nurse Rokossovsky even in the hospital - there near

the wounded husband was always his wife. And he could not find out in the hospital that his family was alive and well, because he knew about this long before he was wounded. Consequently, their romance could not start in the hospital. And all the stories about flowers, gifts, about how Stalin envied Rokossovsky are the fruit of people's imagination, which, by the way, is another evidence of the people's love for their hero.

Rokossovsky's grandson Konstantin Vilyevich confidently refutes the version of the affair with Serova:

"The only driver of Rokossovsky who has been with the general since the beginning of the war and was with him in the hospital, Sergei

Ivanovich Mozzhukhin, claims that he never brought Serov to Rokossovsky. He told me a different story: on the day they met,

Serova invited Rokossovsky to the Bolshoi Theater, of course, when he was on the mend. Grandfather was pleased to be honest,

after all, a famous actress! And after some time they really went there. They entered the theater together with the driver from the

service entrance, found the box indicated in the pass. Serova sat next to Rokossovsky. The whole audience, of course, looked at

the unexpected couple, and the general was uncomfortable under the gaze of the theatrical elite. The performance is over.

Rokossovsky left the theater with Sergei Ivanovich. He got into the car and returned to the hospital. AND

Rumors spread around Moscow...

Svetlana Pavlovna Kazakova, the widow of Marshal of Artillery Kazakov, who in 1942 was the commander of artillery of the

16th Army and at the same time grandfather's best friend, said: the actress somehow came to the hospital one more time. It was at the beginning of May, and my grandmother was already in Moscow. Serov was not allowed to see the general. It's one

thing for an actress who participates in a concert,

the other is the visitor. She is not expected. She asked permission to speak to his wife. Yulia Petrovna left. Serova admitted that she has sympathy for the

general. Grandmother sincerely advised her to put it out of her mind. Everything is clear - a hero, romance, but in life

All

more prosaic...

In our family archive, there is a certificate from the hospital that he was discharged on May 22, 1942. The marshal's service record, orders and archival documents

indicate that on May 25 he

arrived at the front. On the same date, he writes in a letter to his wife and daughter: "Dear and dear my Lulu and

Hell! Arrived safely. I feel good. I yearn insanely. somehow becomes

it hurts that circumstances did not allow me to spend a longer time with you ... "And this, by the way, confirms that he spent several days before the front not with the actress,

but in a new apartment with his wife and daughter. He had not seen them for almost a year, since June 22, 1941, when he went on a military campaign at the head of the

9th mechanized corps ...

Mom told me that the marshal, in his own words, did not have much sympathy for

Valentin Serova. Their meeting did not impress him. And at first he did not understand that the actress interpreted the gallantry that Rokossovsky was known for in her

own way. I think that he received his sight only when one of his acquaintances retold the rumor about his affair with Serova. He immediately sat down at the pen.

He wrote to his wife to keep calm, not to worry: "I know that it will be difficult for you, since you won't get any rumors and gossip. The reason for this is the fact

that many

it was just flattering to associate my name with yourself. Sweep away all these rumors and chatter like rubbish. It was two weeks after returning to the front...

According to the stories of her grandfather, Serova really wrote letters to him, once she came with artists to his troops. Then she insisted on a separate speech with her

brigade at the headquarters of the front. It was the 43rd year, the situation was tense, and he refused. Yes, and artists were allowed to the front

only

because the general understood that people needed to take a break from the war at least for a moment, and he could not deprive the soldiers of a small concert, and even

with the participation of one who "knew how to wait like no one else." As a commander, Rokossovsky was extremely hospitable, and nothing more.

Konstantin Vilyevich refutes another legend related to Serova's relationship

And

Rokossovsky: "Another mistake that I often encountered in various media is a romantic story about how, in 1949, before Marshal Rokossovsky left for

Actor Pavel

Springfeld saw Poland as Minister of Defense under the windows of Serova (06 this Springfield told the actress Inna Makarova.

- B.S.). Moreover, Serova allegedly argued that at five o'clock there would be a military man, whom Pavel would recognize. That is, it was not an isolated case. If you carefully read the biography of the marshal, it becomes clear that Pavel Springfield mixed something up. The fact is that from June 1945 until his appointment as Minister of Defense of Poland, the marshal commanded the Northern Group of Forces, which was stationed on the territory of the Polish People's Republic. And the pathetic departure to Poland in 1949 was actually an elementary move from Legnica to Warsaw. That is, Marshal could stand under the windows of Serova only if she lived in the Polish city of Legnica. It is also possible

debunk other myths.

It's worth mentioning. Before being appointed Minister of Defense of Poland, Rokossovsky probably met with Stalin in Moscow (06 this, as we will see later, General P.I. Batov reports), so, in principle, he could stand under Serova's windows. But it is possible that Springfield (or Makarova) experienced an aberration of memory over the years and in fact meant Rokossovsky's arrival in Moscow in June 1945 to participate in the Victory Parade and subsequent departure to Poland.

According to K. V. Rokossovsky, "grandfather treated Simonov very respectfully, loved his poems.

The poet's books with dedicatory inscriptions occupied a place of honor in the bookcase in his office.

They met many times at the front. After his grandfather returned from Poland, Simonov often invited him to meetings with front-line soldiers. Grandfather always spoke of the poet with respect and had sincere sympathy for him. I already remember this.

And, as far as I know, Simonov also treated his grandfather well. I don't think that if the romance with Serova was a reality, Rokossovsky would have found the strength to communicate with her husband. He was a very shy person, everything was "not good", "uncomfortable" for him. And in such an awkward situation, I can't imagine him."

And here is what theater expert Vitaly Wolf writes about the relationship between Serova and Simonov: "Once in one of the hospitals where the highest command staff was being treated, she was asked to speak in a separate ward. She came there - and saw a pale, emaciated, intelligent, beautiful face, and on it - huge blue eyes, in which there was an impatient and intense expectation. This

was

Marshal Konstantin Rokossovsky. They talked for a long time, and when Serova returned home, she immediately told Simonov that she had fallen in love. No one knows how close Serova and Rokossovsky were. She never told anyone about her love. Only in 1968, having heard on the radio about the death of Rokossovsky, did she tell her daughter, Maria Kirillovna, about their short romance. She didn't go into details...

Summing up everything that we know about the relationship between Konstantin Rokossovsky and Valentina Serova, we can conclude that the version of the descendants looks the most plausible

Rokossovsky. And it is the only one supported by at least some documents.

We have already seen that by the time of his injury, Konstantin Konstantinovich not only knew perfectly well that his family was alive and unharmed, but even established a correspondence with her. In the first weeks after the injury, when his condition was severe, Rokossovsky, of course, had no time for novels. And then his wife, who came to Moscow, constantly looked after him in the hospital, and from

hospital he is almost

didn't go anywhere. After recovery, the future marshal remained in Moscow for only three days. These days, he most likely met with Serova at the theater, but he definitely did not spend the night with her, but with his family in an apartment on Gorky Street. For an affair with Serova, Rokossovsky simply does not remain neither time or space.

Most likely, the novel of the commander and the actress was purely platonic. And, quite possibly, one-sided: she loved Serov, but Rokossovsky did not. Of course, we know very little about the marshal's personal life. But everything we know testifies to his modesty and even shyness. He didn't look like a womanizer at all. A legitimate wife in the rear and a field wife, as they said at the time, were even too many for him at the front. He felt guilty before both and would hardly have risked starting another romance. If Konstantin Konstantinovich liked many women, this does not mean at all that he liked many women.

Most likely, Konstantin Konstantinovich and Valentina Vasilievna could have some

meetings in post-war Moscow, during rare visits there by Rokossovsky. Then, in the mid-1950s, Serova's progressive alcoholism probably made it impossible for any her

meeting with Rokossovsky. Undoubtedly, there were letters from Serova to Rokossovsky. Today it is impossible to say with certainty whether the marshal answered them. In any case, not a single letter

of them

correspondence has not yet been found. Most likely, it is lost forever.

The former driver of Marshal Sergei Ivanovich Mozhukhin left us a sketch of Rokossovsky's stay in Moscow in connection with the injury:

"Somehow I caught a cold. The doctor examined me at the hospital. The diagnosis is pneumonia. It was near Sukhinichi. After a

while, the commander called me to his place. "How are you feeling, Sergei? How is the food?"

"I feel fine," I replied, "but the food sucks." "That's it, you will eat in the kitchen of the War Council.

"No, I won't go there, what should I do there," I refused.

- Well, - said Rokossovsky, - they will bring you food.

And they brought it to me until I fully recovered. If, on a trip, the commander dined somewhere in the dining room, he always took me with him.

Feeling quite well after being wounded, Rokossovsky once asked me to take him around Moscow: "I'm not a Muscovite and I don't know the city well."

And we went. I remember that near the Butyrka prison the general asked: "What is this, Butyrka? This is where I made furniture!" I kept silent. I heard that before the war my army commander spent several years in prison. Today, of course, I know more: he courageously withstood all the interrogations, no one

slandered, shared the last piece of bread with fellow prisoners. He was like that Human.

Maybe that's why people considered it an honor to fight under the command of Rokossovsky.

I drove Rokossovsky through the streets of Moscow for a long time. And suddenly he says: - Seryozha, I want to see how you live.

— I live on the fourth floor, without an elevator. After being wounded, Comrade Commander, it will be difficult for you to get up.

"I'll get up," he said firmly.

Needless to say, the whole house came running to look at the commander of the 16th Army. Conversation

lasted about half an hour and was remembered by everyone. "We will definitely win this war," Rokossovsky confidently said in parting. Then I took him back to the hospital."

Not fully cured, Konstantin Konstantinovich was discharged from the hospital on May 22 and was already at the front on the 26th. His first letter, addressed to his wife and daughter, has been preserved in the family archive:

"Darling, my dear [Iii and Adusya!

Arrived safely. I feel good. I yearn insanely. Somehow it hurts that circumstances did not allow spending more time with you. The only thing that calms me is the thought that I am not so far from you and will be able to take care of you, and maybe sometimes visit you for a short time. Now I live in the forest in a small wooden house. Already fully involved in the work. The road turned out to be very difficult. Heavy rains heavily

spoiled the road, so we drove for about three days. If the roads dry up, you can risk coming to me while you refrain. One of these days I will send something from vegetables - potatoes, etc.

I send the certificate with the bearer of this, you need to attach yourself at the city military registration and enlistment office, it is placed somewhere close to you. Dear GI, do not be bored, remember that I am mentally with you. Love you and only about you think. I burn with the desire to see you soon and be yours not only spiritually, but also physically. I hope that at the next meeting the liver will not bother me. I kiss you, dear, tightly, tightly. Adusyu too. Your always loving Kostya.

Let me know how you get on and what you need. 26.5.42".

Upon returning from the hospital, Rokossovsky continued, on the orders of Zhukov, to make unsuccessful attacks on German positions.

In May 1942, troops of the 16th Army attacked Zhizdra. Rokossovsky recalled this fight like this:

"Then we were still confident that we would break through the enemy defenses and take Zhizdra, opening the way to Bryansk. Apparently, the command of the opposite side was thinking about the same. In an effort to buy time to throw up troops, the enemy used aircraft.

Forty dive bombers formed a circle over the battlefield. First of all

They

attacked the lead tank brigade, which, beautifully turning around, passed a height of two or three kilometers behind our advancing infantry. And then something incredible happened:

instead of rushing forward, the brigade stopped. She stood on a bare height, and the Junkers bombarded her. A new armada of aircraft appeared in the air - up to thirty bombers, accompanied by fighters.

Watching this picture, I could not stay still. He ordered the corps commander to speed up the movement of the main forces and carry out the assigned task. With the corps commissar Latyshev, with Orel and several staff officers, we rushed in cars to the tank brigade that was standing under the bombing. Colonel Orel ran up to the tank and began to knock on the turret with a stone,

causing

commander. Latyshev did the same, and I had to do this, being careful not to get under the caterpillar if the driver decides to turn around. In a word, our position was not a happy one.

Fortunately, everything went well, we still forced the brigade to move from places and help infantry, which was already hard.

And time passed. More and more enemy forces approached the battlefield. Tanks and assault guns came into action on his side. Part of the bombers attacked the infantry. The situation deteriorated sharply.

Our infantry lay down and barely held back counterattacks. The tank corps, under bombardment, stomped on place, scattered throughout the field. Measures had to be taken to hold on to the line reached by the advancing troops. I gave the order to consolidate and temporarily go on the defensive. Some of the tanks formed infantry combat formations, while the main body of the corps was left in my reserve.

When enemy aircraft appeared over the battlefield, we asked the front to support

us though

would be fighters. The request was granted. Soon groups of our planes appeared in the sky.

But they could not alleviate the fate of the infantry: there were few of them.

And yet the Nazis failed to return the space we had captured. Defensive battles went on here for several days. The neighbor on the left also had a minor success, and he also moved

to the defense.

In general, we did not complete the task, but the enemy was beaten up and scared great. No wonder the Germans threw such large air forces into such a small area.

Understand the behavior of the tank brigade. Most of the tankers got into battle for the first time. The furious bombardment stunned them. In the

future, the brigade recovered, fought well. She

helped the rifle units to hold their positions and repel the attacks of German tanks.

Anything can happen in a war. So it happened with this brigade, and with the corps as a whole. But what

most surprising of all - the tank crews got off, in fact, with a fright. There were moments when the flames, smoke and dust from explosions of air bombs completely covered the tanks from observation. It seemed that only a pile of twisted metal would remain there. In fact, only two tanks were damaged in all the time. But this is not always the case, and the tankers know about it."

And here is a description of a new attack, already in June, when there were fewer tanks on the Soviet side, but more aviation.

Rokossovsky

recalled: "The rifle units rose together and rushed forward along with the tanks. We saw how the first trench was captured. Ours moved on, and

then there was a hitch. The enemy counterattacked with a large number of tanks and dense lines of infantry.

For the first time in this battle, our attack aircraft used rockets, which turned out to be

quite an effective tool.

But the battle dragged on, and, despite all the efforts of the troops and the great help of our aviation, they failed to move forward. By noon, the enemy

brought in so many forces that he forced our units to retreat to their original position. Enemy aviation has achieved air supremacy.

The reasons for the failures were not only that the Luftwaffe dominated the air, but also that the Germans defended themselves tactically competently,

having well established the interaction of infantry, artillery and a few tanks and assault guns, making optimal use of their very limited forces and means.

After all, reserves and reinforcements were concentrated at that time in the south, where

prepared a general offensive. The Soviet troops were not yet able to properly organize

interaction of military branches in the offensive. Artillery during artillery preparation fired mainly "on the squares" and inflicted only minimal damage on the enemy.

In his memoirs, Rokossovsky described the May and July attacks of the 16th Army as aimless:

"Generalissimo

Suvorov adhered to a good rule, according to which "every soldier should know his maneuver." And I, the commander of the army, also wanted to know the general task of the front and the place of the army in this operation. Such a desire is an axiom in military affairs. I couldn't

be satisfied with the wording of the task presented to me by the com-front - "wearing down the enemy", realizing and seeing that we wear down ourselves first of all.

In early July, Rokossovsky was appointed to command the Bryansk Front. In this regard, apparently, the first meeting between

Konstantin Konstantinovich and Stalin took place. According to an entry in the visit log, for the first time Rokossovsky found

himself in the leader's Kremlin office on July 13.

1942. Here it should be noted that Stalin received his subordinates not only

v

Kremlin office, but also at their dachas, as well as in the Kremlin apartment. However, the registration of visitors was carried out only

in the Kremlin office. Therefore, it is possible that Rokossovsky met with Stalin more often than indicated in the Kremlin

magazine.

On the Bryansk front, Rokossovsky repelled German attempts to move north along the Don. But on the whole, this direction of the

summer campaign of 1942 turned out to be secondary. The main events unfolded first near Voronezh, and then - in the Stalingrad

and Caucasus directions.

Konstantin Konstantinovich recalled the circumstances of his appointment in the unpublished part of his memoirs:

"Our troops failed to move forward. The offensive actions of the 16th Army ended. By order of the front, she went on the defensive.

Finally! .. But it's still too late. By this time, the fascist German troops, having replenished the units with people, weapons

and equipment and bringing up fresh formations from the west, themselves went over to the offensive, taking the initiative into

their own hands. The Red Army, exhausted by continuous offensive operations in the winter and spring of 1942, was unable to

prevent

them.

At the beginning of July 1942, I was called to the telephone by the HF commander of the front and said,

that the

Headquarters intends to appoint me commander of the Bryansk Front.

By the evening of the same day, an order was received from the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command on the appointment.

I urgently left for Moscow. At Headquarters, I was warmly received by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. He is in general introduced me

with the situation in the Voronezh direction, and after that he said that if I have

accept efficient workers, he will help me get them to staff the headquarters and management of the Bryansk Front. At that time, part of the troops and

the administrative apparatus of the Bryansk Front was transferred to a new one - the Voronezh Front, which was supposed to stand between the Bryansk

And

Southwestern. I named M. S. Malinin, V. I. Kazakov, G. N. Orel and P. Ya. Maksimenko...

I learned that the situation on the Bryansk front was very serious.

By concentrating large forces on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front and taking advantage of

After a heavy defeat of the troops of the Southwestern Front near Kharkov, the fascist German troops went on the offensive in the Voronezh direction on

June 28. Having struck at the junction of the Bryansk and South-Western fronts, they broke through our defenses and began to move quickly in the direction of Voronezh and the Don.

In a number of private operations, the enemy managed to cut off the penetrations formed in his defense during the spring offensive operations of the Soviet troops. Thus, he secured his starting position for the summer offensive operation that had begun. As a result of major miscalculations made by the General Staff and the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, the initiative again passed completely into the hands of the enemy.

I left the General Staff with a heavy sense of resentment and pain in my heart. The realization was haunted by the fact that events in the summer of 1942

would have unfolded completely differently if the Red Army had taken advantage of the respite won in the Battle of Moscow. Having timely switched to strategic defense, it would have replenished the losses incurred in 1941 and created by the summer

campaigns large strategic reserves ...

It is appropriate to note that sometimes in the hasty measures taken by the decisions of the Headquarters, which tried to immediately respond to events taking place at the front, there was no foresight necessary for such a responsible body. War is, in fact,

only

began, and this also had to be taken into account by our Supreme High Command and the General Staff when planning operations.

Let me give you a remarkable example. Already after the end of the war, during repeated meetings with Stalin, one could hear from him: "Do you

remember when the General Staff was the Commissar of Staff Bokov? .." At the same time, he usually laughed. Yes, unfortunately it

happened. Instead of

in order to manage the armed forces, being in the center, where all the data on events in the theaters of war flow and where all the nerves of control are

concentrated, representatives of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief went to the troops. There they, falling under the influence of "local conditions", broke away from the general situation, contributed to the adoption of erroneous decisions by the Headquarters and

their

attempts to replace the commanders only hindered them.

Rokossovsky was outraged that the representatives of the Stavka (and most often in this capacity were the Deputy Supreme Commander

G.K. Zhukov and the Chief of the General Staff A.M. Vasilevsky), not bearing, in fact, any responsibility for the outcome of operations, they actually replaced the front command, in case of success, to share the laurels of the winners with him. However, they didn't actually do what they were supposed to do.

—

centralized coordination of the actions of all fronts, the most expedient distribution of forces and means between them, long-term strategic planning and foreseeing the most probable actions of the enemy.

The former commander of the 65th Army, General of the Army P.I. Batov, described his first meeting with Rokossovsky on the Bryansk Front: "In mid-

July 1942, the Bryansk Front took command of K.K. Rokossovsky. Both soldiers and generals breathed a sigh of relief, we immediately felt the hand of an experienced organizer. I had the fortunate opportunity to

months to work side by side with an outstanding commander and his combat comrades-in-arms at the very headquarters

front.

All employees of the department considered the service with Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovsky a big school. He did not like

loneliness, he strove to be closer to the activities of his headquarters. Most often we saw him with the operators or in the working room of the chief

of staff. He will come, ask what the comrades are working on, what difficulties they encounter, help with advice, offer

consider one or the other. All this created a surprisingly pleasant working atmosphere, when there was neither constraint nor fear to express an opinion different from

senior's judgments. On the contrary, everyone wanted to think bolder, act bolder, bolder

speak. One of the wonderful traits of a commander was that, under the most difficult conditions, he not only knew how to appreciate the useful initiative of his subordinates, but also evoked it with his tireless energy, demanding and humane treatment of people. To this must be added

personal

the charm of a man of broad military knowledge and a big soul. Strict noble appearance, smartness, a thoughtful, serious expression on his face, with a disposing smile in blue, deep-set eyes. The premature wrinkles on his young face and the gray hair at the temples said that he had endured a lot in life. The speech is laconic, the movements are restrained, but decisive. Extremely clear in the formulation of combat missions for subordinates. Attentive, sociable and simple. "

Equally warm memories of Konstantin Konstantinovich remained with the former chief

rear of the Bryansk Front N. A. Antipenko:

"TO. K. Rokossovsky, like most major military leaders, built his work on the principle of trust in his assistants. This trust was not blind: it became complete only when

Konstantin Konstantinovich was personally and more than once convinced that he was being told the truth and that everything possible had been done to solve the task; convinced of this, he saw in you a good comrade in arms, his friend. That is why the leadership of the front was so united and

soldered: each of us sincerely valued the authority of his commander. Rokossovsky on

they were not afraid of the front, they loved him.

Of course, Rokossovsky was not "kind" - he knew how to ask for both negligence and cowardice. One of his orders to the troops of the Bryansk Front directly stated:

"Everyone seen in

manifestation of cowardice and alarmism, take them under special supervision, and in necessary cases, determined by the situation, apply all preventive measures against them ... up to and including execution on the spot.

N. A. Antipenko remembered Rokossovsky's arrival at the Bryansk Front in such a way:

"About him, about his 16th army, they wrote a lot in the newspapers. The name of Rokossovsky did not leave the lips when it came to repelling German attacks on the Volokolamsk highway, about the transition of our troops to

offensive in this direction, and even earlier - about the bloody battles near Yartsevo.

Now I had to face him as my commander. Although we met for the first time, I had the impression that we had known each other for many years.

I briefly spoke about myself, about my service.

"We are in a very difficult position," Rokossovsky said. Looking at the map, he told about the situation at the front.

The 13th Army, which had now become the left flank of our front, fought tense battles with the enemy. I had to help her in every possible way.

After listening to my report on the state of the rear of the front, the commander wished me success in my work. "Once again I ask you to take care of the wounded of the 13th Army," he said in parting.

The same Antipenko testifies that Rokossovsky ordered to allocate vehicles for the procurement of food in the Oryol, Tula and other regions that were part of the rear of the Bryansk Front. At the same time, the commander remarked: "No matter how difficult it is to distract cars and people from the front, it will be even worse if we starve in the winter." The decision was absolutely correct, given that there was relative calm on the Bryansk front at that time. By the way, most of the prepared food was then sent to the Don Front, which Rokossovsky began to command.

P. I. Batov characterized the leadership style of Rokossovsky as follows:

"TO. K. Rokossovsky himself spent most of his time in combat areas, climbed out along with

commanders of the entire front line and formed an opinion of what each division commander is capable of. He soon knew many regimental commanders so much that he could give attestation without looking at the documents.

A personal check by the commander of advanced units and formations is a powerful tool education and

rallying troops. Of course, the checks are different. Front-line soldiers also know such cases when a big boss arrives at the front line, makes everyone in awe and departs, leaving

soldiers
and officers in the most dejected state. With Rokossovsky, the form of expression of will surprisingly well
corresponded
to the democratic nature of our army. This, if you like, was his strength and his deepest source of authority. People
loved him, they
were drawn to him, as a result, an inexhaustible source of martial creativity was always open to the commander.

It was on the Bryansk Front that Rokossovsky had to use units formed from former prisoners for the first time.
He recalled:

"In August, a rifle brigade, formed from people convicted of various criminal offenses, arrived to replenish us. Yesterday's
prisoners volunteered to go to the front in order to atone for their guilt by military deeds. The government believed the
sincerity of their impulse. And so this brigade appeared at our front. Her fighters quickly got used to the combat
situation;
we have seen that they can be trusted with serious tasks. Most often, the brigade was used for reconnaissance in
combat.
She fought aggressively and forced the enemy to reveal his entire fire system. The brigade had excellent snipers.
Like real hunters,
they waited for the Nazis for hours and rarely let them out alive.

The "restless" brigade fought well. For valor in battles, most of its fighters had their convictions removed, and many
received
orders and medals on their chests.

Life has convinced me that you can trust even those who at one time, for some reason, committed a violation
of the law. Give such a
person the opportunity to atone for his guilt - and you will see
How
the good will take over. Love for the Motherland, for one's people, striving at all costs
regaining their trust will make him a brave fighter."

We read this text in the latest edition of Rokossovsky's book "Soldier's Duty", published in 1997 and containing,
according to
the editors, all the notes made in previous editions and now restored according to the author's manuscript. However, a
careful
comparison of the text of the last, sixth edition with the text of the first, which appeared in 1968, shows that then

passage about

"restless brigade" was much more detailed. After the words that the fighters of the brigade forced the enemy to
reveal
their entire fire system, a remarkable continuation followed: "And between battles, we placed this brigade in areas
where an excessively peaceful situation was created. On the very first night, desperate daredevils raided enemy
positions.

They returned with prisoners and trophies. And even during the day there was no salvation for the Nazis. Nose not
could get out of the trenches."

In the typescript of memoirs preserved in the archive of the Rokossovsky family, this episode is described
slightly different edition:

"In August, a rifle brigade, formed from volunteers convicted of various kinds of criminal offenses, who asked to atone for their guilt
on the battlefield,
arrived to replenish us. This connection quickly got used to the combat situation, selflessly performing

the most
difficult combat missions. We used this brigade most often to carry out reconnaissance in combat in various sectors of the armies
and to create a tense
situation for the enemy where a very calm situation had already been created. I myself had to observe a picture in some sectors of the
defense of the 3rd and 48th armies, when at a distance of 300-400 meters, separating our positions from the enemy, linen and uniforms
were peacefully
hung out to dry both from our side and from the opposite side.

We sometimes deployed the brigade mentioned above in such areas, and it quickly restored the proper battle order. Usually the
first move of
these desperate daredevils was a night raid on enemy positions. As a rule, such an operation ended in success, the capture of a
significant
number of prisoners and trophies. Subsequently, the prisoners showed that on such

the section occupied by the brigade, it was impossible for the enemy not only to show himself, but even stick out his finger. There were
many snipers in the
units, and they, like real hunters, lay in wait for the enemies day and night, hunting them. There were many such hunters

destroyed enemy soldiers and officers. Many members of the brigade were awarded orders and medals for various feats.

I cited this combination as an example of the fact that even among people who in the past violated the laws established by Soviet society to
some extent,
love for the Motherland, for their people and boundless hatred for the enemy who violated the peaceful life of Soviet society ".

It remains a mystery whether the words about the successes of the former convicts were entered by the censors into the marshal's
manuscript
to explain why exactly the brigade soldiers received orders and medals, or, on the contrary, this place was present in the author's text, but
was
already cropped.

current

editors. If the second provision is true, then one of the motives for deleting this text could

to serve what followed from it: usually the brigade was located on those sectors of the front where the enemy behaved passively and his offensive seemed unlikely.

The fact is that formations of former Gulag prisoners, as well as penal battalions and companies, were careful not to use them on the defensive to repel enemy

attacks. After all, then the fighters who were considered unreliable would have the opportunity to surrender. Another thing is to throw them on the offensive, in the same

reconnaissance in force. There is no way to surrender here. To do this, you need to run to the German positions alive and unharmed, and there is almost no chance of such an outcome.

Probably, it was no coincidence that the "restless brigade" was sent at the disposal of Rokossovsky. The future marshal, and then still a lieutenant general, knew the

prison order firsthand and therefore could more easily

find a common language with former prisoners, make them fight not for fear, but for conscience.

Rokossovsky recalled further events:

"In the second half of August, I was suddenly summoned to Headquarters. I also found N. F. Vatutin at Stalin's (here Rokossovsky's memory failed him.

According to an

entry in the journal of visitors to the Kremlin office, he was at Stalin's reception on August 2, 1942, together with Vatutin,

Vasilevsky and

head of the Main Artillery Directorate N. D. Yakovlev. Consequently, the offensive on Voronezh began to be planned as early as the beginning of August, before the

Germans broke through to the distant approaches to Stalingrad. - B.S.). The question of the liberation of Voronezh was considered. Vatutin proposed to advance with all

the forces of the Voronezh Front directly on the city. We should have

help

him, holding down the enemy on the western bank of the Don with active actions of the left-flank 38th Army. I knew that Vatutin had repeatedly tried to take

Voronezh with a frontal attack. But

nothing is

worked out. The enemy was firmly fortified, and our troops, advancing from the east, had to force the Don and Voronezh rivers before storming the city. I proposed a

different solution to the problem: to deliver the main blow not from the eastern, but from the western bank of the Don, using the favorable position of the 38th Army,

which hangs over the enemy north of Voronezh. To do this, you just need to bring more forces here, and, if possible, covertly. With this option, a blow to the Voronezh

grouping would be delivered to the flank and withdraw our troops to the rear of the enemy occupying the city. In addition, this blow would inevitably force the enemy

to weaken

their forces

advancing against the Southwestern Front. In that situation, this option, in my deep conviction, was the most correct.

But Vatutin stubbornly defended his plan, and my arguments, apparently, were not convincing enough. The promise that, if my version was adopted, the Bryansk Front would put at the disposal of the neighbor all the troops that we could muster without prejudice to our defenses, did not work either. Stalin approved Vatutin's proposal, while promising to reinforce the Voronezh Front with additional formations from the Stavka reserve, as well as Guards mortar regiments armed with M-31 rocket launchers.

This was the end of Stalin's visit. Going out into the next room, Vatutin and I discussed all the issues related to the actions of the 38th Army, which for the duration of the operation was reassigned to the Voronezh Front, and each went to his own place.

At the same time, some changes took place in the headquarters of the Bryansk Front. Rokossovsky recalled:

“Our headquarters was replenished with command staff. Several comrades arrived from the 16th Army.

IN

In particular, instead of M. I. Kazakov, who had gone to the Voronezh Front, he became chief of staff

M. S. Malinin, V. I. Kazakov arrived at the post of head of the artillery of the front, head

connection was P. Ya. The head of the rear turned out to be the energetic General N. A. Antipenko, who knew the business well. My deputy for formations was General P.I. Batov, an old combat commander, an excellent driller, with good organizational skills. From the first day of meeting

him i

noticed that he was weary of his position. It was difficult for a person with such an ebullient nature to sit at the headquarters.

Political work in the troops was headed by a member of the Military Council of the front, S. I. Shabalin,

Human

gifted, able to correctly direct the activities of the political apparatus and party organizations. In short, a team of employees has formed on the Bryansk Front, capable of ensuring the combat operations of the troops in any conditions.

Soon this team, almost in full force, went with Rokossovsky to the Don

front,
commanded by the marshal.

The Don Front was to play an important role in the counteroffensive at Stalingrad. Stalin

gathered his best generals near Stalingrad, realizing that it was there that the outcome of the war was decided. P.I. Batov, who was present at Rokossovsky's telephone conversation with Stalin, told in his memoirs how this appointment happened (although he preferred not to mention the latter's name once again in his memoirs):

"One September evening, our fate changed dramatically. In the working room of the chief of staff, the commander summed up the day. There were Malinin, Kazakov, Proshlyakov and Orel. The phone rang. Rokossovsky was called to the HF apparatus. In a small village hut it was well heard every word that came from distant Moscow:

- Aren't you bored on the Bryansk front? - Rokossovsky smiled, but said nothing. — Decision

The rates are created by the Don Front. Very promising. We suggest you take command of it, if you don't mind...

How can you object!

- In this case, take with you whom you see fit and fly to Moscow in the morning. The Bryansk Front will be received by Max Andreevich Reiter.

Rokossovsky looked around everyone with a joyful look ...

"I am glad, comrades," Rokossovsky said simply. Pointing his finger at Malinin, Kazakov, Proshlyakov and Orel, he kept saying: "You are with me... You are with me."

My heart could not stand it: -
Comrade Commander, I'm ready to go even to a division!

— I share your desire, Pavel Ivanovich. But for the time being, remain in command of the front until Reuter arrives, and we in Moscow will resolve the issue.

M. A. Reuter arrived three days later with the new chief of staff, L. M. Sandalov. There was a meeting of the Military Council of the front. Received encryption. Reuters read it and passed it on to me, saying

in an undertone:

"Honestly, I envy ..." The cipher spoke of the appointment of Batov as commander of the 4th Panzer Army of the Don Front.

Soon the 4th Panzer Army, in which there were practically no tanks left, was renamed the 65th Army, and at the head of it, Batov successfully fought until the end of the war, invariably remaining under the command of Rokossovsky.

Upon arrival near Stalingrad, Konstantin Konstantinovich wrote to his wife and daughter: "The time will come, and the Fritz will be beaten in the same way as they were beaten at Alexander Nevsky ("Battle on the Ice"), near Grunwald and many more in some places."

In his memoirs, Rokossovsky described the beginning of his activities as commander of the then Stalingrad Front:

"In September, having arrived at Headquarters, I was acquainted with the situation that had developed in the Stalingrad region and with the task that was assigned to me. In general, he introduced me to her

deputy

Supreme Commander General of the Army G.K. Zhukov. She came up with the following. In the interfluvium of the Volga and Don, a strong grouping of Nazi troops broke through. And so

deep on its flank, on the eastern bank of the Don, it was planned to concentrate a grouping of our troops consisting of at least three combined arms armies and several tank corps in order to launch a counterattack. I was assigned to lead it.

The idea itself looked very tempting and promising. The only concern that caused concern was whether the Headquarters would provide the time necessary for the concentration of troops and for their preparation for an organized entry into battle.

A few days later, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief urgently demanded me to see him. Arriving to him, I learned about the difficult situation near Stalingrad, where the enemy managed to break through to the Volga on the northern outskirts of the city. In this regard, the previously planned events were canceled, and the forces allocated for their implementation were sent directly to Stalingrad.

I should have flown there and replaced the commander of the Stalingrad Front, General V.N. Gordov, who could not cope with this role. The rest of the directions I had to get on

place from the Deputy Supreme G.K. Zhukov.

Saying goodbye to me, Stalin added that a special commission, headed by Bokov, was flying there, to Stalingrad, with the task of purging the troops and headquarters of unsuitable command and political personnel. He also emphasized, so that I would keep in mind that the Southwestern Front in general looks more beyond the Volga. What Stalin meant by this, I did not ask and

left him

with unhappy thoughts. The realization that the Headquarters again did not have enough endurance to carry out a counterattack so correctly conceived depressed me. True, they sent me where they went

tense battles, and did not return to a calm section of the common front, in which I found consolation.

From Rokossovsky's memoirs, one might get the impression that in September 1942 he met with Stalin only once. In fact, Stalin received Rokossovsky twice, on September 22 and 28. Obviously, at the first meeting, the organization of a counterattack on the eastern bank of the Don, led by Rokossovsky, was discussed, and at the second, Stalin announced that the troops intended for the counterattack had to be transferred to Stalingrad, and ordered Rokossovsky, along with Zhukov, who was present at the same meeting, to go there.

It must be said that Rokossovsky was rather critical of the actions of the General Staff and the Headquarters, which led the Soviet troops to Stalingrad and the foothills of the Caucasus. Regarding the defeats suffered by the Red Army in the south in the summer of 1942, he wrote in an uncensored

parts of their memoirs:

"Having concentrated large forces on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front, the fascist German troops went on the offensive, broke through the defenses of the troops of the Bryansk and Southwestern fronts and rushed to the southeast. Weakened in the winter and spring offensive operations, our troops were unable to delay the enemy and were forced to retreat under the blows of his superior forces. In addition, the enemy had greater mobility and air supremacy, which the Headquarters did not take into account when organizing opposition to him. The mistake of the initial period of the war was repeated, when directives that did not correspond to the situation were issued, which only played into the hands of the enemy. Our troops hastily advancing to meet him, not having time to concentrate, on the move, disorganizedly entered into battle with the enemy, who in these conditions had a huge

numerical and quality excellence. It was especially felt in mobile tank and motorized formations and in aviation. The open flat terrain contributed

actions of enemy forces.

Everything was done differently from how we were taught military affairs in schools, academies, at military games and maneuvers, contrary to what was acquired by the experience of the two previous wars.

In the same place, Rokossovsky strongly scolded Vasilevsky, Chief of the General Staff:

“For me, the role of G.K. Zhukov and A.M. Vasilevsky, and even more so G.M. Malenkov near Stalingrad, in that particular situation at the end of September, seemed incomprehensible. Zhukov and Malenkov did a good deed: without stopping for a long time, they flew off to exactly where they should have been at that time. But the stay of the Chief of the General Staff near Stalingrad and his role in the activities related to the events taking place there are bewildering.

At the suggestion of A. M. Vasilevsky, the South-Eastern Front was created, which included

troops of the left wing of the Stalingrad Front. It happened at the height of the fighting. If such

the measure was caused by the foresight of the impossibility of preventing the enemy from reaching the Volga, then it is understandable. General A. I. Eremenko is appointed commander of the South-Eastern Front, and in

the headquarters of the 1st Guards Army is used as the command and headquarters of this front. But just a few days later (the registration had just begun), Vasilevsky, being at Yeremenko, subordinated Gordov, commander of the Stalingrad Front, to him. It

must be added to this that the headquarters of the Stalingrad Front was created on the basis of the administrative apparatus of the KOVO. So

He

was, one might say, an old cohesive headquarters. And, despite this, he is subordinated to another - weak, only emerging.

Probably, such a strong-willed decision was born only because the chief of the General Staff was personally in the troops, in this

case with Eremenko. In general, the case of subordination of one front to another is unprecedented. And under the condition of

foreseeing a possible exit of the enemy to the Volga, it is generally incomprehensible. This is what finding a boss leads to

The General Staff is not where it should have been.”

Rokossovsky flew to Stalingrad with Zhukov. On the NP they found General V.N. Gordov, commander of the Stalingrad Front, whom Rokossovsky was supposed to replace. He scolded his subordinates on the phone, not embarrassed in

expressions. Zhukov made a remark to him: “Screaming will not help here; you need to organize the fight smarter, and not stomp

on

place.”

“Hearing his teaching,” Rokossovsky wrote, “I could not help smiling. To me

involuntarily

I recalled cases from the battle near Moscow, when the same Zhukov, being the commander of the Western Front, scolded us, the commanders of the armies, no easier than Gordov ... Zhukov asked me why I was smiling. Are not the memories of the battle near Moscow? Having received an affirmative answer, he declared that it was near Moscow, and besides, at that time he was "only" the commander of the front "(and not the deputy Supreme, as near Stalingrad). Rokossovsky was probably the only Soviet military leader of this level, completely alien to the "obscene style"

guides. In the most critical situations, he remained correct with subordinates, for what enjoyed their love.

Rokossovsky's armies unsuccessfully tried to cut off the German troops that had broken through to the Volga with a blow from the north and unite with the 62nd Army fighting in Stalingrad. However, the German tank divisions managed to gain a foothold and easily repelled Soviet attacks, even without serious air support, which acted primarily against Stalingrad.

Rokossovsky believed that without significant forces of tanks and artillery, you could not break through the enemy defenses in the interfluvium of the Don and Volga:

"Our 24th Army, with its left flank, in cooperation with the 66th Army, was supposed to defeat the enemy units north of the city and link up with the troops of the 62nd Army of the Stalingrad Front. For this operation, we were allowed to use seven rifle divisions coming from the Stavka reserve. No additional means of reinforcement (artillery, tanks, aircraft) front

Not was getting. Under these conditions, it was difficult to count on success. The enemy grouping relied here on well-fortified positions.

Since the main role in the upcoming offensive was assigned to the 66th Army, I spoke with Malinovsky.

He began to beg me not to send seven new divisions into battle:

"We'll just lose them in vain."

Luckily for us, we received only two out of seven divisions by the date set by the Headquarters. They were transferred to the 66th Army. The rest were late, and we left them in the reserve of the front. Subsequently

they played a big part."

In his memoirs, Konstantin Konstantinovich did not write that the new divisions were not trained at all and were not of great combat value.

On October 7, the commander of the Don Front received a directive to develop a plan for a new offensive operation:

"In order to defeat the enemy troops near Stalingrad, at the direction of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, the commander of the Stalingrad Front is developing a plan to strike him

reinforced left-flank 57th and 51st armies in the general direction of o03. Tsatsa, Tundutovo.

Deadline around October 20th.

Simultaneously with this operation, an eastern strike should be delivered by the center of the Don Front in the general direction of Kotluban - Alekseevka, for which it is allowed to use seven suitable divisions in addition to the troops at the front.

The operation you have planned for the next few days with a short strike on Stalingrad should be carried out regardless of these instructions.

I ask you to submit your decision and an outline of the operation plan for approval by the Headquarters by October 10.

The armies of the Don Front, as well as the armies of most other fronts, were dominated by untrained recruits who were shy to go on the attack. Therefore, Rokossovsky was forced, like his predecessors, to demand strict observance of the famous order No. 227, which provides for the introduction of detachments.

The results of the implementation of this order in mid-October 1942 were reported to the head of the Department of Special Departments of the NKVD V. S. Abakumov by the Special Department of the Don Front:

"Reference 00 NKVD STF to the UOO NKVD of the USSR on the activities of the barrage detachments of the Stalingrad and Don fronts

Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR, Commissar of State Security of the 3rd rank Comrade. Abakumov

In accordance with the order of NPO No. 227, in units operating in the Red Army for

as of October 15th.

193 barrage detachments were formed. Of these, in parts of the Stalingrad Front, 16 and the Don Front were formed - 25, and a total of 41 detachments, which are subordinate to the Special Departments of the NKVD of the armies.

From the beginning of their formation (from August to October 15 of this year), barrage detachments detained 140,755 servicemen who had fled from the front line.

Of those detained: 3,980 people were arrested, 1,189 people were shot, 2,776 people were sent to penal companies, 185 people were sent to penal battalions, 131,094 people were returned to their units and transit points.

The greatest number of detentions and arrests was made by the Donskoy barrage detachments.

And

Stalingrad fronts.

On the Don Front, 36,109 people were detained, 736 people were arrested, 433 people were shot, 1,056 people were sent to penal companies, 33 people were returned to penal battalions. in their parts and to transit points 32,933 people.

15,649 people were detained along the Stalingrad Front, 244 people were arrested, 278 people were shot, 218 people were sent to penal companies, 42 to penal battalions, 14,833 people were returned to their units and to transit points.

It should be noted that the barrage detachments, and especially the detachments on the Stalingrad and Don fronts (subordinate to the special departments of the NKVD armies), during the period of fierce battles with the enemy, played a positive role in restoring order in the units and preventing an unorganized withdrawal from the lines they occupied, the return of a significant number of soldiers on the front line.

Here it was about the activities of detachments even before Rokossovsky took command of the Don Front.

And the same major of state security V. M. Kazakevich, deputy head of the Special Department of the Stalingrad Front, on February 17, 1943, in a memorandum "On the work of special agencies to combat cowards and alarmists in parts of the Don Front for the period from October 1, 1942 to 1

February 1943" summed up the actions of the detachments for October 1942 - January 1943. Now in the report there were also examples of instability related to Rokossovsky's troops, but they by no means prevailed:

"During the fighting of the troops of the Don Front, the mass flight of military personnel from the battlefield and the withdrawal of units without an order from the command were isolated cases.

As established, cowardice and panic in the units on the part of individual servicemen were most evident during the period of intense defensive battles, as well as during the offensive our troops, when the enemy, putting up stubborn resistance, repeatedly went over to counterattacks, trying to stay on the occupied lines of defense.

For example:

In parts of the 62nd army, which fought fierce defensive battles with superior forces enemy, only in September 1942 he was convicted and shot by regulations special bodies of 195 servicemen who showed cowardice and fled from the battlefield.

In December last year, during the period of the successful offensive of our troops, 37 cowards and alarmists were convicted and shot by special agencies in front of the line.

With the beginning of the offensive of our troops, during counterattacks and strong resistance of the enemy, in the 21st Army only for the period from November 19 to November 30, 1942, there were two cases of mass flight from the battlefield and withdrawal of units without an order from the command, while in the following months there were successful cases of offensive Mass manifestations of cowardice and panic in the units have not been established.

In total, for the period from October 1, 1942 to February 1, 1943, according to incomplete data, cowards and alarmists who fled from the battlefield were arrested by the special agencies of the front - 203 people, of which:

a) sentenced to VMN and shot before formation 49 hours. 6) sentenced to various terms of labor camp and sent to penal companies and battalions 139 hours. In addition, 120 cowards and alarmists were shot before formation according to the orders of special agencies.

The given figures on the number of arrested and convicted cowards, alarmists for October and November for 21 and 64 armies are incomplete due to the fact that

Operational reports

of retired special agencies were archived by special agencies through the NGO NKVD of the South-Western and Stalingrad fronts ...

<...>

In the fight against cowards, alarmists and the restoration of order in units that showed instability in battles with the enemy, an exceptionally large role was played by army detachments and detachments of divisions.

So, on October 2, 1942, during the offensive of our troops, individual units of the 138th division, met by powerful enemy artillery and mortar fire, faltered

and

panic

fled back through the battle formations of the 1st battalion of the 706th joint venture, 204th rifle division, which were in the second echelon.

By the measures taken by the command and detachment battalion of the division, the situation was restored. 7 cowards and alarmists were shot in

front of the formation, and the rest were returned to the front line

front.

On October 16, 1942, during an enemy counterattack, a group of Red Army soldiers of 781 and 124 divisions, in the amount of 30 people, showed

cowardice and began to flee the battlefield in a panic, dragging other servicemen with them.

The army detachment of the 21st Army, which was located in this sector, eliminated the panic by force of arms and restored the previous situation.

On November 19, 1942, during the offensive of units of the 293 division division, during an enemy counterattack, two mortar platoons of the 1306 joint venture,

together with platoon commanders, ml. lieutenants Bogatyrev and Yegorov, without an order from the command, left the occupied line and, in

a panic, throwing their weapons, began to flee from the battlefield.

The platoon of submachine gunners of the army detachment, who was on this site, stopped the fleeing and, having shot two alarmists in front of the

formation, returned the rest to their previous lines,

after which they

progressed successfully.

On November 20, 1942, during an enemy counterattack, one of the companies of the 38th line of the division, which was on

altitude, without offering resistance to the enemy, without an order from the command, she began to randomly retreat from the occupied area.

The 83rd detachment of the 64th Army, serving as a barrage directly behind the battle formations of the 38th SD units, stopped the fleeing company in a panic and returned it back to the previously occupied section of the height, after which the personnel of the company showed exceptional endurance and perseverance in battles with the enemy.

On all cases of cowardice and panic in the units, we informed the Military Councils of the armies, by decision of which the senior officers who showed cowardice and fled from the battlefield were tried by a military tribunal.

Kazakevich.

Comparing these two documents, we can conclude that Rokossovsky had to resort to the services of barrage detachments,

to executions and other repressions relatively less often,
how

commander of other fronts that participated in the Battle of Stalingrad. On the one hand, this is due to the fact that Rokossovsky's troops almost did not defend themselves, but mainly attacked. On the other hand, Konstantin Konstantinovich, as we remember from the history of the former prisoners who fought on the Bryansk Front, always preferred to rely not on repression,

and on

conviction and trust. Although, if necessary, he did not hesitate to resort to detachments, and to executions of cowards and alarmists.

A funny thing happened in those days. The former commander of the 66th Army, General A. S. Zhadov, recalled how on October 24

"Late in the evening, the front commander K.K. Rokossovsky heard my report on the results of the battles over the past day and agreed with my conclusion about the need for army formations to gain a foothold on the achieved line.

Vasilyev (pseudonym of Stalin. - B.S.) is very pleased with the actions of the army, - he said in conclusion

our conversation Rokossovsky. But he didn't like your last name. He asked me to convey to you his wish to change it. Submit your decision by morning.

The task I was given was delicate and unusual. Change the surname with which he was born, lived almost half his life! But the wish of the Supreme is more than wish. That's an order!

I told General A. M. Krivulin, a member of the Military Council, about the conversation.

And

Chief of Staff, General F.K. Korzhenevich. We started discussing different options.

"It's not worth it for you, Alexei Semyonovich, to rack your brains," Feodosy Konstantinovich Korzhenevich said after some thought. -

You can keep the surname in its base and replace only the letter "and" with the letter "a".

His proposal pleased me. In a report sent on the morning of November 25 to the commander of the front, I asked that my last name be read as Zhadov. A few days later I was handed the resolution of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. "Very good.

I. Stalin". I have kept this document.

It's funny that neither Rokossovsky nor Zhadov himself were surprised by the order to change the natural surname of the last

Zhidov. Aleksey Semenovich seemed not to be delighted with Stalin's order, but he did not even dare to utter a word.

Rokossovsky

described this incident in his memoirs as follows:

"On the way to our command post, we stopped at the 66th army to A. S. Zhadov. His real name was Zhidov, and he changed it

under the following circumstances. Once Stalin, after listening to my report on the HF about the reasons for the slow advance of

the troops of the 66th Army, asked me what a commander was like. In response to my positive assessment, he

immediately instructed me to personally talk

with

Zhidov about changing his last name to Zhadov. At first I did not understand Stalin, and therefore I was extremely surprised by such a

proposal. He said that the army commander does not belong to those who walk backwards. True, his troops could not advance now,

but I have just reported on the reasons. At the same time, he once again emphasized that Zhidov commanded the army confidently.

Stalin remarked to my objection that I apparently did not understand him. He has no complaints about Zhidov as a commander,

but in the army the fact that the name of the commander sounds also plays a certain role. That is why I should persuade Zhidov to

change his surname to any at his discretion. After negotiations, the commander of the 66th agreed to become Zhadov. I fulfilled

my role as "godfather". When I reported to Stalin, he was satisfied.

Stalin, undoubtedly, took into account the rather widespread anti-Semitism in the army, which he himself was not alien to. Rokossovsky, like Zhadov, did not see anything wild in the fact that the Supreme Commander-in-Chief orders one of the generals to change his surname. Konstantin Konstantinovich seems to have begun to think that Stalin is always right.

Or, nevertheless, in the depths of his soul he was indignant at such an order, but did not transfer his indignation to paper? Who knows.

However, in the 66th army of Zhidov-Zhadov at that moment, indeed, not everything was all right. This is evidenced by the Memorandum of the Special Department of the Don Front on the offensive operations of the army dated October 30, 1942, addressed to Abakumov:

"By the order of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command and the Military Council of the Front, units of the 66th Army were assigned a combat mission - from the morning of 20.10 in the indicated sector, launch an offensive, break through the enemy's defenses and by 23.10.42 unite with the troops of the Stalingrad Front, exterminate the enemy grouping that broke through to the Volga river.

To ensure the fulfillment of this task, the 66th army, in addition to the five infantry

divisions, four SDs from the 24th Army and four fresh SDs from the Headquarters reserve (62, 212, 226 and 252 SD) were attached.

The army was also given: 23 artillery regiments of the RGK, 12 guards mortar regiments, several tank brigades. For every kilometer of the front line of the army, there were 74 guns, not counting mortars and installations "RS".

Frontal aviation worked on the army sector to attack the enemy and cover our units from air.

The main task - breaking through the enemy's defenses - was assigned to new divisions that arrived from the Stavka reserve. According to the plan of operation, 62, 212, 252 SD, having replaced the old divisions, by 10/20/42 concentrated on the starting line. The rest of the divisions took up defense, pinned down the enemy, covered the right flank of the army. While fighting, 62, 212, 252, ac 24.10 and 226 SD, for the period from 20 to 26.10 did not have the necessary success.

During offensive operations, the enemy provided only fire resistance - artillery, mortars, machine-gun and automatic fire. There were a few weak raids
aviation. According to the testimonies of captured Germans, the offensive sector of our units is defended by units of the enemy's 3rd motorized division, badly battered in battle.

Despite the great superiority of our advancing units in people, firepower, tanks, aviation, the task set by the Headquarters was not fulfilled by the units of the 66th Army.

On 10/26/42, the units advanced at most 3 km and, having occupied 3-5 lines of German defense, suspended the offensive, having suffered heavy losses in personnel (up to 4-5 thousand each division).

Front command, in particular: Commander Lieutenant General Rokossovsky, early. headquarters, Major General Malinin, deputy. Major General Trubnikov, commander of the front, as well as the command of the army, in particular: Commander Major General Zhadov and others, explaining the reasons for the failure at the front and failure to complete the task, declare that our infantry, especially

new divisions, is not trained, does not know how to fight and is not able to fulfill the assigned task. They express the opinion that it is necessary to stop offensive operations, go on the defensive, and withdraw new divisions to the rear for retraining.

26.10. The front commander, Lieutenant-General Rokossovsky, being at the headquarters of the 66th Army and sharing his impressions of the operation, said: "... The new divisions that arrived were completely unprepared for battle. Today I will report to Comrade. Stalin, ask him to let the personnel again

formed divisions at least a month passed combat training ... "

On the same day, Commander-66, Major General Zhadov, to the question of the head of the Special Department of the 66th Army, Comrade. Servianov - why do not we have success, answered: "... People are not trained and completely Not prepared, many do not know how to wield a rifle at all. Before you fight, you need to train and prepare a new division for at least a month. The command staff, both middle and senior, are tactically illiterate, cannot navigate the terrain and lose control of subunits in battle. The divisions that arrived at the front at the beginning of operations lost up to 4,000 people. each. I consider it impossible to conduct a further offensive, this will only lead to

superfluous loss of personnel. In the presence of large artillery fire and massive raids by our aviation,

units are advancing very slowly... Enemy aircraft showed no activity. The enemy forces in front of the front of the 66th army are insignificant (the company has 27 people), the enemy has gathered soldiers from the rear ... "

10/26/42, beginning Front Headquarters Major General Malinin, Deputy. front commander, Major General Trubnikov, in the presence of our operative, shared their views on the course of the offensive our parts.

To the question of the operative - whether the artillery preparation was successfully carried out, how our aviation operates, whether it suppresses enemy firing points, Trubnikov, waving his hand, answered: "... The point here is not aviation, the point is that our infantry does not stand, the infantry does not fight, that's the whole trouble ... "

Malinin, supporting Trubnikov, said: "... The infantry is not rising, we have artillery preparation

sufficient, we have so many artillery assets that it is not necessary to speak, we have 74 guns per kilometer. In addition, there are 12 mortar regiments in this area.

The Germans don't have a damn thing here, the Germans certainly suffer heavy losses from our mine artillery fire. In this area we have an undoubted great superiority in everything and superiority in aviation. Enemy aircraft are of little concern to us these days, and our tanks are not bad ... Our infantry is useless ... Send here a well-trained regiment of determined fighters, this regiment would march to Stalingrad ...

It's not about artillery, you can't suppress all firing points. Artillery does its job, presses the enemy to the ground, but the infantry at this time does not rise and does not go on the offensive .. and.

Front commander Rokossovsky, under the impression that the reason for the failures are bad actions of infantry fighters, tried to use detachments to influence the infantry.

Rokossovsky insisted that the detachments follow the infantry units and force the fighters to attack by force of arms.

It is no coincidence that I quote so abundantly from the documents of the Special Sections. Only they give a true idea of the quality of the human material that had to

lead

Rokossovsky and other Soviet generals. Konstantin Konstantinovich and the staff of the front headquarters focused on the poor

training of infantry fighters, the special officers - on the poor training of commanders at all levels. Both were right. The

head of the Special Department of the Don Front, V. M. Kazakevich, tried to challenge the assertion of Rokossovsky and his

comrade that practically untrained people had to be thrown into battle. Specialist cited statistics

personal

composition of divisions of the 66th Army, trying to prove that in the new, recently formed divisions, there are quite enough

personnel, experienced staff, and in this indicator they do not differ from

divisions formed long ago. Here Kazakevich was right in the sense that the newly formed divisions of the Red Army in the autumn of 1942, in terms of the quality of their personnel

did not fundamentally differ from those divisions whose headquarters existed before the war. But what the old and new divisions

had in common was just that, due to heavy losses, untrained troops prevailed everywhere.

replenishment.

Thus, Rokossovsky had to lead such soldiers and commanders, the degree

whose training allowed them to resist experienced, well-trained soldiers and officers of the Wehrmacht only at the cost of

very heavy losses. It seems to me that Konstantin Konstantinovich was one of the few, if not the only commander of the Red Army, who could successfully command large masses of troops in the armies of Western countries, where it was really

necessary to protect people and try to achieve maximum results with minimal losses. But Rokossovsky was smart enough to

understand that his

the desire to "fight in a civilized way" should not go beyond certain limits dictated by the Stalinist system. In the first place in this

system, it was required to put the seizure of territories and the achievement of certain strategic and political goals, and not the

achievement of the most favorable ratio of one's own and the enemy's losses. An attempt in practice to

fight not by numbers,

but by skill, to act too independently, inevitably led to death.

After the failure of the October 19-23 offensive, it became clear to both Rokossovsky and Stavka that the narrow corridor separating the 62nd

Army from the troops of the Don Front could not be eliminated with the available forces. By that time, a plan for a broader operation

had matured at the Headquarters and the General Staff, providing for the encirclement of the main

forces of the 6th German

Army.

Rokossovsky described the events associated with the Stalingrad counteroffensive in the following way:

their
memoirs:

"With a sound assessment of the situation that had arisen and in anticipation of the impending winter, the enemy had only one way out - an immediate withdrawal over a long distance. But, underestimating the capabilities of the Soviet Union, the enemy decided to keep the space he had captured, and this was in the current situation timely used by our Supreme High Command.

We learned about the upcoming counter-offensive already in October from G.K. Zhukov, the deputy of the Supreme High Command, who arrived again. In general terms, he briefed us, the commanders of the Don and Stalingrad fronts, with the planned plan. All activities were carried out under the guise of strengthening the defense. On November 3-4, in the area of the 21st Army, G.K. Zhukov held a conference with the commanders of the armies and commanders of divisions intended for an offensive in the direction of the main attack. Here

issues of interaction between the Don Front and the South-Western Front at the junctions were worked out. A similar event was held with the command staff of the Stalingrad Front.

I was somewhat surprised by the fact that the conference was in the nature of working out with the commanders of the formations of issues that were within the competence of the front commander, and not the representative of the Headquarters.

Another thing is the linking of interactions between the fronts. Here, questions may arise that are easier for the Stavka representative to solve right there, on the spot.

To link some issues of interaction, I also had to visit the command post of the commander of the Southwestern Front, General Vatutin, where Vasilevsky, Chief of the General Staff, was also located. I found the behavior of both to be strange. The impression was created that Vasilevsky was in the role of commander of the front, who resolved a number of serious issues related to the upcoming actions of the troops of this front, often without consulting the commander. Vatutin, in fact, did not even play the role of chief of staff: he went to the telegraph office, led

negotiations by telegraph and telephone, collected reports, reported them to Vasilevsky. All those questions that I intended to discuss with Vatutin had to be discussed with Vasilevsky".

Rokossovsky in the role in which Vatutin was without any particular inconvenience, to be happened.

According to P. I. Batov, on October 20, Rokossovsky told him: "One of these days you will receive instructions for the development of an army operation. In total, seven armies will participate in the offensive. I think we'll start on holidays ... And now we'll go to the bridgehead, I want to look at your eagles.

Batov outlined the plan of the operation in this way, in which his 65th Army of all the armies of the Don Front was assigned the main role:

"In the system of three fronts, the main blow was delivered from the north by the troops of N. F. Vatutin, in their including our the right neighbor is the 21st Army. The goal of I. M. Chistyakov is to break through the defense, introduce large mobile formations into the gap and quickly reach Kalach. But at the same time, the left flank of the 21st Army turned out to be under the dangerous threat of a blow from a strong German grouping (I call it Sirotinsky), which was stationed in a small bend of the Don. It was then that the work of the 65th Army began. Advancing from the Kletsky bridgehead, its divisions were supposed to take on the blow of the German tank and infantry units and reliably cover the flank of the army of I. M. Chistyakov, which at that time would smash the Romanians. That was our first task. Then our divisions, together with Chistyakov's rifle units, were to reach the Peskovatka area and thereby seal the ring around the cut-off enemy grouping, completing the work begun by the mobile formations. Finally, the third and last task that our army was already solving in the interests of its front: being its main strike force, we covered the Sirotinsky group of Nazi troops from the southwest, while General I.V. Galanin was supposed to intercept the crossings in Vertyach. Thus, the 65th and 24th armies cut off several selected divisions of the Germans, not to mention the army corps of the Romanians.

The task of Rokossovsky's troops was complicated by the fact that, unlike the troops of the Southwestern Front, they were opposed not only by Romanian troops, which had a low combat capability, but also by much stronger German divisions.

Konstantin Konstantinovich stated:

"The plan of the offensive operation provided for the participation of troops from three fronts. Stalingrad

the front was supposed to strike from the area of the Sarpinsky lakes, the Donskoy - by active actions to tie down the maximum enemy forces in the interfluvium of the Volga - Don, and on the right wing to strike

strike, closely interacting with the neighboring right, the newly created South-Western Front, which was to bring down the main blow on the enemy from bridgeheads on the southern bank of the Don. Thus, two powerful strikes were planned on the flanks of the Stalingrad enemy grouping in order to encircle and destroy it ... "

It cannot be said that the Germans knew nothing about the Soviet counter-offensive in advance. As noted in

In his memoirs, the famous Reinhard Gehlen, former head of the Foreign Armies - East department, "On November 4, 1942, an important report was received along the Abwehr line. It said: "According to information received from a trusted person, on November 4 a meeting of the military council was held under the chairmanship of Stalin, which was attended by twelve marshals and generals ... It was decided to carry out all planned offensive operations before November 15,

how much is

weather conditions permit. The main blows: from Grozny in the direction of Mozdok, in the area of Lower and Upper Mamont in the Don region, near Voronezh, Rzhev, south of Lake Ilmen and near Leningrad. There are references to this report in the works of German and foreign researchers. Hitler and other leaders of the Wehrmacht were informed about him on November 7th. There would be enough time to withdraw the 6th Army from Stalingrad. In fact, the Soviet troops were originally supposed to go on the

offensive near Stalingrad at an earlier date (in one of the Zhukovsky reports to Stalin, November 15 appears), and only a delay in the concentration of forces and means forced to postpone its start until November 19. In fact, the Soviet Southwestern Front delivered the main blow not on its right wing, near the Upper and Lower Mamont hamlets, against the Italians, but on its left wing, against the Romanians. However, it is quite likely that a deeper envelopment of the enemy and a strike on the right flank of the Southwestern Front were originally envisaged, as the unknown agent reported.

But the scale of the Soviet offensive, aimed at encircling the German group, the German command could not predict. Hitler did not want to withdraw troops to the Don - this would mean recognition of the collapse of the strategy on the Eastern Front. Moreover, almost until the very day of the counteroffensive, the troops of the 6th Army continued active hostilities in Stalingrad, trying to throw Soviet units into the Volga. This deprived the German command of the opportunity to take at least palliative measures - to transfer part of the divisions of the 6th Army from the city to strengthen the flanks,

defended by much less combat-ready Romanian units.

Initially, it was assumed that the Southwestern and Don Fronts would go on the offensive on November 9, and Stalingrad on November 10. But by the indicated date they did not manage to complete the concentration of forces and means. Therefore, the start of the offensive was postponed to November 19 for the Southwestern and Don fronts and to November 20 for Stalingrad.

In general, the offensive developed successfully, and already on November 23 the pincers closed. Rokossovsky recalled how difficult it was to liquidate the encircled group:

"As a result of the offensive of our troops, the area occupied by the encircled enemy grouping has almost halved. By the end of November, it was less than one and a half thousand square kilometers. In some areas the enemy was pushed back, in others he retreated to more advantageous lines. The Nazis widely used the system of our fortifications, built in the summer, before the battles for Stalingrad. The reduction of the front of defense allowed the enemy much to condense the battle formations of his units, and the abundance of various fortifications on the line where his troops retreated, to quickly organize a solid defense. The enemy also used the advantage that he was able to quickly maneuver his reserves inside the circle, transferring them to any threatened direction. It is quite understandable that our troops, greatly thinned during the continuous and long offensive, could not overcome the resistance of such an enemy on the move.

In the battles from November 28 to November 30, some success was achieved by the troops of the 21st and 65th armies: they captured Peskovatka and Vertyachim. In other areas, neither we nor our neighbor achieved results. Having visited various sectors, I became convinced that without special, serious preparation for an offensive, one cannot hope for success. At the next conversation on HF, I considered it my duty to report this to Stalin. He also raised the question that it would be more expedient to entrust the operation to eliminate the encircled enemy grouping to one front - Stalingrad or Don - with the subordination of all troops operating near Stalingrad to it.

Stalin did not give a definite answer. At this time, the Stavka's attention was turned to the outer front of the encirclement, where forces were sent from its reserve and from the troops fighting the encircled enemy. So, three rifle divisions and four

anti-tank regiment, and from the Stalingrad Front - almost all tank and motorized connections and parts. All this greatly weakened the already few

formations leading continuous battles near Stalingrad. But in the situation created by that time, these measures were correct.

By the beginning of December, the outer front of the encirclement passed at a distance of 40 to 100 kilometers from the boiler.

This made it easier to eliminate the enemy inside the ring. But the forces to accelerate this operation are clearly not

enough..."

Rokossovsky recalled:

"We were not able to defeat the enemy even then. But with their active actions, our troops and the troops of the Stalingrad Front inflicted great damage on

him in manpower and equipment, forced him to spend ammunition, which the surrounded Nazis had less and less. The enemy was

pushed back from

Don in the direction of the Volga for 20-30 kilometers, the ring around it shrank even more ...

Without waiting for the approach of the 2nd Guards Army, we began to prepare for the offensive. Headquarters representative A. M. Vasilevsky, who was with us with the task of coordinating the actions of the two fronts, took an active part in the development of the operation plan ...

The basic idea was laid down in the plan of the operation: by strikes at the center of the encircled group from two sides, dismember it, and then liquidate it in parts.

The troops of the Don Front strike the main blow from west to east. The troops of the Stalingrad Front are moving towards them, which strike from the southeast

to the west ... "

At this time, Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, appointed commander of the Don Army Group, organized a counterattack under the leadership of the

commander of the 4th Panzer Army, Hermann Goth, to rescue the 6th Army. The deblocking group from the Kotelnikov area launched an offensive against

units of the 51st Army.

According to Rokossovsky,

"On the morning of December 12, fighting began in the Kotelnikovsky direction. Enemy

slightly

ousted the units of the 51st Army of General N.I. Trufanov, which was operating on the outer front of the encirclement. The commander of the Stalingrad Front, General A. I. Eremenko, fearing that the enemy

did not break through to his encircled troops, turned to the Headquarters with a request to transfer to him the 2nd Guards Army, which was arriving near Stalingrad, to use it against the Manstein group.

From numerous observations and reflections, it could be concluded that in the situation that has developed, the enemy will take all measures to keep the entire active grouping of our troops near Stalingrad as long as possible. so, he

will try

to create the preconditions for closing the huge gap in his front, formed as a result of the successful offensive of the Soviet troops in the Stalingrad and Rostov directions.

Pondering over this conclusion, it seemed to me that it would still be more expedient to use the 2nd Guards Army in the way that the Stavka initially intended to do, that is, quickly deal with the encircled grouping. The bold option opened up huge prospects for future actions on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front. The game, as they say, was worth the candle, and the risk was not so great. Some enemy groupings, supposedly hurrying to help the encircled, turned out to be exaggerated by those who reported them, and could not provide much help. They consisted of the remnants of broken units and rear teams, gathered in groups under different names, and thought more about how to get out of trouble themselves than about helping those surrounded. Of course, I can be reproached for the fact that now, when everything has become clear,

Can

argue and prove anything, but I was a supporter of the use of the 2nd Guards

army in the first place to defeat the encircled enemy. He also offered to turn the entire 21st Army against them in the event of enemy forces approaching those surrounded from the outside. The Stavka preferred to accept the option proposed by its representative, Vasilevsky. We thought it was more reliable. But even this option did not exclude elements of risk. The beautiful

operation planned by the Headquarters in the Rostov direction could not have succeeded. However, that is how it happened.

The operation was narrowed down, since all attention and significant forces were diverted to the so-called Manstein group. This helped the Germans avoid an even bigger catastrophe in the Rostov direction than near Stalingrad.

P. I. Batov recalled:

“On December 8, at the NP of the army, located under the Cossack mound, it was reported that in

Vertiyachy arrived K. K.

Rokossovsky and calls the commander. Having skipped 12 kilometers along the Vertiyachinskaya beam, I entered the dugout of our command

post. Here, in addition to the commander of the front, there were generals M. S. Malinin, V. I. Kazakov, K. F. Telegin and the commander of the

2nd Guards Army R. Ya. Malinovsky.

After saying hello, the front commander said: "Now everyone is assembled... Let's start the meeting of the Military Council of the front."

Issues related to the development of an operational solution were raised for discussion.
on

breakthrough of the German defenses in order to quickly eliminate the encircled grouping. the main idea

The plan of the operation was to first divide the troops of Paulus, who were in the "boiler", into two parts by delivering the main blow to the center - from

west to east. On the powerful force of the 2nd Guards Army, fully equipped and with a well-equipped mechanized corps, this

there were high hopes.

Malinin acquainted with the operational situation on the Don Front, which became more complicated
in connection with

the appearance of Manstein's tank divisions in Kotelnikovsky, which in turn caused a revival of the Germans throughout the ring of the encircled group. The front headquarters proposed to introduce the 2nd

guards at the junction of the 65th and 21st armies, whose strike groups would adjoin the troops of R. Ya. Malinovsky and act together with them. Thus,

in the main direction of the cutting blow, the forces of three armies were to advance. Malinovsky reported on the status

suitable troops: in his army there are two rifle and one mechanized corps, formed from Siberians and Far East.

The offensive was scheduled to begin on 14 December. But Manstein hit the troops of the Stalingrad Front on the twelfth from Kotelnikovsky.

All our plans changed, since the Headquarters immediately transferred the 2nd Guards Army to Yeremenko's disposal to repulse and defeat the

enemy's deblocking grouping.

Konstantin Konstantinovich was upset that he failed to defend his proposal to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief to use the troops of General Malinovsky. The essence of the proposal was to ensure that, despite the approach of Manstein's troops,

execute

the plan outlined above and approved on December 9 by the Headquarters, thereby accelerating the liquidation of the encircled group. And subsequently, all the liberated forces of the front - six

armies -
must fall on the troops in a hurry to release the encircled grouping of Paulus, and defeat them.

The Supreme Commander-in-Chief recognized Rokossovsky's proposal as bold and worthy of attention, but too risky. The headquarters accepted the proposal of A. M. Vasilevsky to use the Second Guards Army to reinforce the troops operating against Manstein. In connection with this decision of the Headquarters, the Don Front could no longer count on the fact that the army of R. Ya. Malinovsky would become part of it. Rokossovsky proposed to temporarily suspend the operation to eliminate the German group Paulus. He proceeded from

What
insufficiently powerful strikes against the encircled Nazi troops by our armies, which are exhausted and weakened by continuous long battles, nothing but superfluous

losses, they will not bring us. Therefore, I considered it necessary to solve both problems sequentially, without dispersing the available forces and without scattering. The headquarters agreed with his proposal and promised to strengthen the troops of the Don Front before conducting the final operation in the Battle of Stalingrad.

The use of the 2nd Guards Army against the Manstein relief group
turned out
redundant. The Soviet offensive on the Don and the defeat of the 2nd Hungarian and 8th Italian armies forced the German command to transfer there the main striking force of the deblocking group - the 6th Panzer Division, which had recently arrived from France, without which the offensive to help Paulus had to be stopped even before being put into battle 2nd Guards Army. It would probably be more expedient to use Malinovsky's army for the offensive
on
Rostov-on-Don, which would cut off the entire southern wing of the German Eastern Front. But Stalin decided otherwise.

As for Rokossovsky's proposal to use the 2nd Guards Army to quickly defeat the encircled Paulus grouping, then, analyzing the course of subsequent events, you come to the conclusion that in this case it would not have been possible to achieve a quick victory over the encircled. After all, when on January 10, 1943, Rokossovsky's troops went on the offensive against the 6th German Army, they had to fight for three weeks. And by that time, the encircled were much more exhausted than in mid-December, and experienced a much more tangible lack of ammunition, since the German airfields moved away from the "cauldron" by

100-150 kilometers, and weather conditions made it even more difficult to supply

Stalingrad group. In

the event that the troops of Rokossovsky and Eremenko, reinforced by the 2nd Guards Army, would launch an offensive against the army of Paulus, as planned, in mid-December, the fighting could generally drag on for 4-5 weeks, which would only cause

additional losses of the advancing Soviet troops and would not hasten in any significant way the deadline for the liquidation of the Stalingrad "cauldron".

Thus, the best way to use the 2nd Guards Army would be to throw it on the offensive against Rostov. Then the deblocking group would have rolled west faster, and there would have been a real chance to cut off the German troops stuck in the

Caucasus.
But Bet

decided not to take risks and preferred to have a titmouse in her hands - guaranteed destruction of the group surrounded in Stalingrad, devoid of outside help.

On December 8, the newly appointed member of the military council of the Don Front, K.F. Telegin, arrived at the headquarters of the Don Front. At the first meeting, he remembered Rokossovsky as follows:

"Rokossovsky turned out to be a very tall man. But besides, he was distinguished by that sports article, which so attractively rejuvenates people. I knew that he was over forty-five, and the youthful mobility with which he got up and left the table was the first impression on which all subsequent ones were then layered.

For a minute or two, we, as if looking for a topic for conversation, exchanged

insignificant

phrases: "How did you get there?" - "Thank you, good!" - "How are you?" - "Great!" - and something else like that.

However, it was not these phrases that I remember more, but what I managed to read in the eyes, to catch in the gestures and behavior of the commander.

Soon, however, the conversation improved. And, probably, it was no coincidence that he came to Moscow. Interest in how and with what

Moscow lives now, what is new in the capital, K.K. Rokossovsky did not show

out of courtesy

- he left on the fields of the Moscow region a particle of his heart, and a considerable one. His relatives were then in Moscow: his wife

Yulia Petrovna and daughter Ariadna.

Konstantin Konstantinovich turned out to be extremely open and even more than that - a wide-open open person.

Attractive from the very first minutes was his manner of communication. He was even, delicate, considerate, and in

literally every other way endearing,

and, as I later found out, he was always like that, with everyone without exception - from an ordinary soldier to an army commander.

He spoke quietly, sometimes thinking, as if weighing the arguments. Very noticeable was his ability to respond in time to the interlocutor's intention to enter into a conversation. At such moments, he would stop in mid-sentence or ask encouragingly: "Did you want to say something?"

There was an easily perceptible intelligence in his behavior. He laughed out loud very rarely, smiling more often. At the same time, his face became surprisingly beautiful.

The liquidation of the encircled grouping due to the fact that the 2nd Guards Army was transferred to the Kotelnikovo area was postponed. A number of Soviet generals at that time suggested abandoning the large-scale offensive against Paulus's army altogether, and starving it out.

According to the memoirs of K.F. Telegin, the commander of the 62nd Army, Chuikov, spoke to Rokossovsky about the army of Paulus:

"Is this an army today?" asked V. I. Chuikov, now with an ironic smile. - No! he answered his own question. "This is a camp for still armed prisoners of war and nothing else!

- However, still armed! - appreciating the harsh optimism of the commander with an approving smile, K.K. Rokossovsky noted.

Also, A. I. Eremenko in January 1943 expressed the idea that Paulus's troops could be "squeezed out" by starvation without conducting bloody battles with them.

And then Rokossovsky admitted to Telegin that his proposal to unite the troops of the two fronts, acting against the encircled group, under a single command "would not look the best. After all, it can be interpreted in such a way that I am personally interested in obtaining full power. But Andrei Ivanovich Eremenko, both in rank and in age, is older than me, he carried the entire burden of the defensive period on his shoulders. We have known each other since the twenties, interaction with him has been worked out reliably, and, in the end, if each

fulfills his duties with due responsibility for the success of the common cause, then everything will receive the desired completion ... ".

However, such an association was nevertheless carried out at the initiative of Stalin. Rokossovsky noted in his memoirs that on December 30 "a

directive from the Headquarters came to transfer all the troops involved near Stalingrad to the Don Front. This event was timely, and we immediately set about establishing contact with the 57th, 64th and 62nd armies. Rather, we already had these connections. The question of uniting the forces of both fronts was gradually worked out by our headquarters, and, albeit a little, we managed to do something. Long before this, Vasilevsky had told me that the commander of the Stalingrad Front was extremely dissatisfied, that Rokossovsky's headquarters

sends

of his officers to his troops, trying to establish some contacts with them. But is our

prediction came true. Now it has become much easier for us to contact the armies that have retreated to us.

Probably, the decision to appoint Rokossovsky was made at a meeting with Stalin on December 29th. In addition to Zhukov, it was attended, in particular, by members of the State Defense Committee V. M. Molotov, G. M. Malenkov, L. P. Beria and A. I. Mikoyan.

Eremenko was really very offended, believing that he, who defended Stalingrad from the first day, had been robbed of the laurels of the winner.

Eremenko's old

wounds were opened from resentment and from what he had experienced in the days of the Battle of Stalingrad. In the hospital, and then in the sanatorium,

Andrei Ivanovich had time to analyze in detail the events connected with the preparation of the counteroffensive and his relationship with Zhukov. On

February 1, 1943, clearly referring to Georgy Konstantinovich, Eremenko noted bitterly in his diary:

merits, but relationships with superiors ... It is a terrible misfortune that in our century questions are still resolved in this way. This entry appeared in connection with the

publication of a decree of January 28 on awarding a group of generals who distinguished themselves in the battle for Stalingrad with the Order of Suvorov, 1st

degree. At the same time, almost all the awardees, except for Eremenko, were awarded the next titles. Zhukov, who received the Order of Suvorov No. 1,

became Marshal of the Soviet Union on January 18. Gordov, Rokossovsky and Vatutin received the rank of colonel general, Vasilevsky - army general,

and a month later, 16

February, - and the rank of marshal. But Stalin was in no hurry to produce Eremenko from colonel-general to army general. Andrei Ivanovich saw Zhukovsky's intrigues here.

In an entry dated January 19, 1943, Eremenko wrote a significant part of the guilt for his disgrace pinned on

Zhukova: "Zhukov, this usurper and rude man, treated me very badly, just not humanly. He trampled on everyone in his path, but I got it more than others. Not could me

forgive me for my no-no, and I will tell about his shortcomings in the Central Committee or the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. I had to do this as a commander of the troops, responsible for the assigned area of work, and as a communist. I got hit from Zhukov for this. I already worked with Comrade Zhukov,

know him like

flaky. This man is scary and narrow-minded. A careerist of the highest rank... If the opportunity arises, I will write more about him." Such an opportunity presented itself in the Tskhaltubo sanatorium, where Eremenko was recovering from his illness. Here he wrote on February 28, 1943: "It should be said that Zhukovsky's operational art is 5-6 times superior in strength, otherwise he will not get down to business, he does not know how to fight not in numbers and builds his career on blood."

It is significant that Eremenko did not hold a grudge against Rokossovsky, believing that Zhukov submitted the idea of unification of the Stalingrad and Don fronts and the appointment of Rokossovsky to Stalin. But it is unlikely that Stalin would have followed someone else's recommendations in this case - Iosif Vissarionovich preferred to solve personnel issues himself.

Interestingly, on August 5, 1943, Eremenko made the following noteworthy entry in his diary. This was after a meeting with Stalin near Rzhev in the village of Khoroshevo. Eremenko then commanded the Kalinin Front, and they discussed the plan for the Dukhovshchinsky-Demidov operation. Then Stalin peculiarly apologized to Eremenko for not letting him accept Paulus's surrender: "You, apparently, are still offended by me for not accepting

your his

proposals at the last stage of the Battle of Stalingrad about who should finish off Paulus. Should not be offended. We know, all our people know that in the Battle of Stalingrad you commanded two fronts and played the main role in the defeat of the fascist group near Stalingrad, and who finished off the tied hare does not play a special role. Of course, I gave directives, but you directly commanded and led this battle there. Undoubtedly, our people, led by the great Russian people, won, but they needed to be led. But then Eremenko made a record that was absolutely amazing for those times:

"Comrade Stalin is significantly responsible for the extermination of military personnel before the war, which was reflected in the combat capability of the army. That's why he, before he starts to hear the plan

the upcoming operation, turned the conversation to the subject of personnel in order to probe me ... In the course of this conversation, Comrade Stalin repeatedly spoke about many generals who were released from places conclusions before the war itself and fought well.

"And who is to blame," I timidly asked Stalin, "that these poor, innocent people were imprisoned?" "Who, who ..." Stalin snapped irritably. - Those who gave sanctions on their arrest, those who were then at the head of the army. And he immediately named comrades Voroshilov, Budyonny, Timoshenko. They, according to Stalin, were largely responsible for the extermination of military personnel. It was they who were unprepared for war. But the worst characterization ... was given to them for not protecting their military cadres. Actually, in this conversation, I listened more and answered questions. Stalin asked me how well I know this or that marshal, general, released from arrest. As for the marshals, I gave an evasive answer, saying that I knew them poorly, from a distance. The party created authority for them, and they rested on their laurels. That's why

Badly showed themselves in the Great Patriotic War. That's what people say about them, I also adhere to this opinion. "The people speak correctly," Stalin interjected. As for the released generals, I said that comrades Gorbатов, Rokossovsky, Yushkevich, Khlebnikov - all of them during the war, and some even before it, were under my command, and I give them the highest rating, since they are smart generals, brave warriors devoted to the Motherland. "I agree with you, Comrade Eremenko," Stalin remarked. Each time, speaking about the shots, he looked at me intently, searchingly, apparently in order to determine what impression his characteristics and assessments of people make on me.

As you can see, already in 1943 Eremenko had no doubt that Stalin was directly guilty of

pre-war extermination of military personnel. Rokossovsky, as we remember, in 1937 doubted Stalin's involvement in the repressions, believing, like many others, that the NKVD was acting against the will of the leader. He probably changed his mind during the war years, when he became convinced that nothing was done in the country without the will of Stalin. But he retained respect for Stalin for the rest of his life and, unlike Eremenko, never once criticized him in his articles and memoirs.

A. E. Golovanov, who met Rokossovsky near Stalingrad, recalled: "The leadership of the liquidation of the encircled group was entrusted to Rokossovsky, who brilliantly coped with this task. Directly communicating with him during this operation, I

I always saw in front of me a balanced man with deep military knowledge, accessible to anyone who worked with him. Politeness and tact were his hallmarks, but personal modesty in everyday life complemented his appearance. Such was Rokossovsky, with whom I had a chance to get to know each other closely. Further communication with him already in other places and on other fronts only strengthened in me the deep respect that one can have for a person who knows how to direct all the energy of people working with him in the right direction and at the same time remains, as it were, an inconspicuous and modest person. "

Undoubtedly, in choosing the commander of that front, which would accept the surrender of the 6th German army surrounded in Stalingrad, Stalin had the final say. And he chose the commander whom he considered the most worthy in terms of his role in the war, whom he unconditionally trusted.

In addition, Stalin could already then have far-reaching plans related to using

Rokossovsky's Polish nationality in the process of the future establishment of Soviet control over Poland. After the Stalingrad victory, this issue could soon be on the agenda.

Here is what Chief Marshal of Aviation A.E. Golovanov, a former personal pilot of Stalin, wrote in his memoirs about the relationship

between Stalin and Rokossovsky: "With great respect,

was

Stalin treated Rokossovsky with great warmth, he, like a man, that is, without showing it in public, loved him for his bright mind, for his breadth of thinking, for his culture, modesty, and, finally, for his courage and personal courage. I have not heard the Supreme call anyone by

name and

patronymic, except for B. M. Shaposhnikov, however, after the Battle of Stalingrad, Rokossovsky became

the second person whom Stalin began to call so.

Golovanov also argued that "suspiciousness and suspicion were the companions of the Supreme Commander, especially people with foreign surnames. I even happened to convince him of the impeccability of certain comrades whom I happened to recommend to direct a certain work ... However, after studying this or that person and making sure of his knowledge and

abilities, he trusted such people, I would say, unlimitedly. But, as they say, God forbid that such people show themselves somewhere on the bad side. Stalin never forgave such things to anyone."

Rokossovsky was just a man with a foreign surname, but Stalin's confidence in him was never shaken. And he just gave Konstantin Konstantinovich a New Year's gift, instructing him to single-handedly liquidate the enemy grouping surrounded near Stalingrad.

Konstantin Konstantinovich recalled how they met the New Year, 1943:

"On December 31, taking advantage of some calm (relative, of course), we decided to celebrate the New Year. Members of the Military Council of the front and comrades from Moscow gathered at our headquarters - Vasilevsky, Novikov, Golovanov, writers Vanda Vasilevskaya, Alexander Korneichuk. At the request of Novikov, the pilots brought a Christmas tree on a passing flight, which they decorated here with what they could. Everything was done impromptu, but it turned out great.

We met the New Year in a friendly and comradely atmosphere. Many good wishes were expressed, all our toasts and conversations were permeated with strong faith in the coming victory over the enemy.

We also remember our loved ones. My family was already in Moscow at that time. The wife took an active part in the work of the Anti-Fascist Committee of Soviet Women, and the daughter entered the school of intelligence officers, organized by the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement.

A. E. Golovanov remembered this New Year's celebration in such a way:

"New, 1943, we happened to meet at K.K. Rokossovsky. At first, there was a small incident between General A. A. Novikov -

Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force and V. D. Ivanov - Deputy

Chief of the General Staff. At the very beginning, Novikov, already a little tipsy, proposed to raise the first toast to G.K. Zhukov.

Ivanov stood up and declared that he would not drink for Zhukov, then Novikov also stood up. Things began to take an undesirable turn, I

also had to get up and, since they were both small in stature, it was not difficult to seat them on

their seats

(Golovanov was almost two meters tall. - B.S.). Meanwhile, Konstantin Konstantinovich

raised his glass (a faceted tea glass) and offered the first toast to Comrade Stalin, which was common at that time and everything

always started with this. The evening went very well, we all wished

Successes to Konstantin Konstantinovich in defeating and eliminating the enemy grouping

and, as

they say, peacefully dispersed to rest, for there was hard work ahead. I would not mention the "incident" cited here if it did not play any role in the further development of events. We were all well aware of A. A. Novikov's special disposition towards Zhukov, but at the same time

It was about time that there was also bewilderment why Alexander Alexandrovich violated the usual ritual and offered to drink the first toast not for Stalin.

Rokossovsky claims that it was he who came up with the idea to send start

offensive ultimatum to Paulus with the offer of honorable terms of surrender. Chief Marshal of Artillery N.N. Voronov in his memoirs attributes the idea of the ultimatum to himself. Which of them is right, it is impossible to determine today. Stalin approved the idea with an ultimatum.

The text of the ultimatum read, in part:

"In the conditions of the hopeless situation that has developed for you, in order to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, we suggest that you accept the following terms of surrender.

1. All German encircled troops, led by you and your headquarters, stop resistance.
2. To you in an organized way to transfer to our disposal all personnel, weapons, all military equipment in military property in good condition.

We guarantee to all officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers who have ceased resistance life and

security, and after the end of the war, return to Germany or to any country where they declare

the desire of prisoners of war.

We preserve military uniforms, insignia and orders, personal belongings, valuables for all personnel of the surrendered troops, and edged weapons for the highest officers.

All surrendered officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers will immediately be given normal food.

All the wounded, sick and frostbitten will be provided with medical assistance."

They decided to give the Germans an ultimatum on January 8, two days before the start of the offensive. This attempt

ended in failure. According to Rokossovsky, "our attempt to show humanity to the enemy in a critical situation was not successful. Grossly violating international rules, the Nazis opened fire on the parliamentarians. There was only one thing left for us now - to use force.

However, another attempt was made on 9 January. Rokossovsky claimed: "Day and night we continued to broadcast the terms of surrender on the radio. Planes were scattered over the territory

enemy, our leaflets calling on German soldiers and officers to stop resistance. The same comrades volunteered for the role of parliamentarians as the day before.

This time, events developed somewhat differently. On the morning of January 9, our parliamentarians managed to safely reach the enemy positions, where they were met by German officers at the agreed place. Refusing to hand them the package, the parliamentarians demanded that

their

escorted to the command post. They arrived there blindfolded. On KP scarves from the eyes

were removed, and the envoys were brought before a group of German senior officers. In the presence of our envoys, one of the officers reported by telephone to his superior about the arrival Soviet

parliamentarians and that they demand that the package be handed over personally to Paulus. Some time later, our parliamentarians were told that the command of the German troops was refusing to accept the ultimatum, the content of which they knew from radio broadcasts. The parliamentarians returned. This ended the attempt to call the Nazi command to reason. After our report to the Headquarters on the rejection of the ultimatum by the enemy, they wished us success in resolving the issue with weapons.

On January 10, 1943, the last Soviet offensive began in Stalingrad. It dragged on for three whole weeks, despite the fact that the Germans experienced an acute shortage of ammunition and food. However, they were helped by fortifications left over from the Soviet defense of Stalingrad. And the frosty and snowy weather prevented the use of aviation to support the offensive and significantly slowed down the pace of advancement of the attackers.

Rokossovsky recalled:

"Although as a result of a powerful strike by our artillery and aviation, the German defense in some directions was suppressed to the entire depth of the first position, the surviving enemy

units stubbornly resisted. In places, the enemy brought his regimental and divisional reserves into battle, throwing them into counterattacks with the support of tanks. We saw with what difficulty the infantry of the 65th Army overcame the enemy's fortifications. And yet,

accompanied by separate tanks and direct-fire guns that were in her battle formations, she moved forward. The battle took on a protracted character, our troops had to literally gnaw through the enemy defenses. The enemy fire intensified. We, who were watching the battle, had to change places several times to escape from

enemy mortars, and twice we even came under machine-gun fire. But, despite the stubborn resistance of the Nazis, by the end of the day, the formations of the 65th Army on the entire 12-kilometer section of the front were able to wedge into the enemy defenses to a depth of five kilometers. The success was somewhat less on the left flank of the 21st Army and on the right of the 24th. In the sectors of the remaining armies, the advance was insignificant, but by their actions they fettered large enemy forces, facilitating the task of the formations that delivered the main blow.

As for the German counterattacks with the help of tanks, it is hard to believe. After all, by that time the tanks on the encircled did not have a move due to lack of fuel. As the German historian Manfred Kerig writes, at that moment "the lack of fuel did not allow the maneuvering of heavy guns." What can we say about tanks.

Rokossovsky continued: "The frost reached 22 degrees, snowstorms intensified. Our troops had to advance across open terrain, while the enemy was in trenches, dugouts and dugouts. It was necessary to truly love one's Motherland, Soviet power, and fiercely hate the enemy in order to overcome these formidable positions. Fulfilling his duty, the Soviet soldier did it. Trench after trench, bunker after bunker, the fighters took. Every step forward cost blood."

Here it should be noted that the Germans, practically deprived of food and winter uniforms, even in dugouts froze more than the Red Army in the open field.

Rokossovsky said:

"There were much more Nazis in the ring than we expected. Now it is difficult to determine who is to blame for this miscalculation, since the operation to eliminate the encircled enemy

at first it was carried out by the troops of two fronts - the Don and Stalingrad. Figured figure: 80-85 thousand people. Perhaps she belonged to that part of the troops that acted against the Don Front. Now we suddenly learned that after so many battles our enemy

has

about 200 thousand people! These data were confirmed by all types of intelligence and testimony.

prisoners. (By the way, I must say that the representative of the Headquarters, N.N. Voronov, was also very interested in how many troops were in this cauldron, and even personally interviewed the prisoners.)

Of course, every day this number decreased, because the enemy suffered heavy losses in battles. But, despite the hopeless situation, he resisted desperately.

Continuous multi-day battles in harsh conditions also tired our troops. In addition, we carried

losses not only from enemy fire, but also from the cold.

The fighters were all the time in the open air, without the opportunity to warm up at least from time to time. The losses of personnel increased, and all the sources from which we used to draw replenishment dried up. Meanwhile, the resistance of the enemy did not decrease, since as the territory occupied by him decreased, his battle formations became denser.

The small number of infantry forced us to lay the whole burden of gnawing through the enemy defenses on

artillery. We basically began to use infantry only for securing captured frontier."

Significant adjustments had to be made to the initial estimates of the number of encircled. As Rokossovsky wrote,

"according to the headquarters of our front, it was approximately established that by the time the encircled enemy grouping was cut, that is, by January 26, its forces were determined at 110-120 thousand people. According to

the same calculations, the losses suffered by the Nazis in the battles from January 10 to 25, that is, in sixteen days, amounted to over 100 thousand people ... The Nazi command doomed hundreds of thousands of their soldiers to death. For several months it forced them to fight without any hope of salvation. In essence, these people, by the will of the Hitlerite

clique, were doomed to the full

destruction. Only the humanity of the Soviet people saved the lives of many German soldiers. Yesterday's enemies now stood before us, unarmed and subdued. In the eyes of some

detachment and fear, for others there are already glimmers of hope.

Over 91,000 soldiers and officers were taken prisoner (according to German estimates, up to 113,000 Germans and Romanians were captured. - B.S.). During the liquidation of the boiler, the troops of the Don Front captured 5,762 guns, over 3,000 mortars, over 12,000 machine guns, 156,987 rifles, over 10

thousand machine guns, 744 aircraft, 1,666 tanks, 261 armored vehicles, 80,438 motor vehicles, over 10,000 motorcycles, 240 tractors, 571 tractors, 3 armored trains, 58 locomotives, 1,403 wagons, 696 radio stations, 933 telephones, 337 different warehouses, 13,787 wagons and a host of other military equipment.

Among the prisoners were 24 generals led by a field marshal ...

POWs gave us a lot of trouble. Frosts, difficult conditions of the terrain, devoid of forests, lack of housing - most of the settlements were destroyed during the fighting, and we placed hospitals in the remaining ones - all this greatly complicated the matter.

First of all, it was necessary to organize the dispersal of a huge mass of prisoners, create controlled columns, pull them out of the ruins of the city, take measures to prevent epidemics, feed, drink and warm tens of thousands of people. With the incredible efforts of frontline and army rear workers, political workers, doctors, this task was completed. Their intense, frankly, selfless work in those conditions saved the lives of many prisoners of war.

Endless columns of German soldiers moved along the roads. They were led by German officers, who were made responsible for the observance of the military Order on the way and on

stops. The head of each column had a card in his hands with a marked route and an indication of stopping points and overnight stays.

Fuel, hot food and boiling water were brought to the places of halts. According to the reports of staff commanders, political workers and according to reports received from those responsible for the evacuation of prisoners of war, everything was going well.

I must note that the prisoners themselves turned out to be quite prudent: each of them there was a spoon, a mug and a bowler hat.

The attitude towards prisoners of war on the part of the fighters and commanders of the Red Army was

truly

humane, I would say more noble. And this despite the fact that we all knew how inhumanly the Nazis treated our people who were captured by them.

German

prisoners of war generals were placed in houses, in decent conditions for that time, they had all their personal belongings with them and

did not need

anything.

In the trophies listed by Rokossovsky, the number of

captured and

destroyed tanks and aircraft. There had never been such a quantity of armored vehicles in the "boiler", and there were no Luftwaffe aircraft there at

all. By the time

the Soviet offensive began on January 10, the German 6th Army had 95 tanks and 33 assault guns in service, and in total, by the time of the

encirclement,

it had about 300 armored vehicles. And even if in the number of trophies

all included

aircraft shot down by Soviet aircraft and anti-aircraft artillery, as well as those killed in accidents during the implementation of the "air bridge"

to the Paulus army, this

number looks greatly exaggerated. After all, according to German data, in the period from November 24, 1942 to January 31, 1943, during

the implementation of the "air bridge" with the Paulus army, only 490 aircraft were irretrievably lost.

And the situation of the German prisoners of war near Stalingrad was NOT SO blissful as it might seem to the reader who read Rokossovsky's memoirs.

On January 29, 1943, a directive was issued by the military council of the Don Front to the military

advice

armies about shortcomings in relation to prisoners of war and special contingents and measures to eliminate them. It was by no means about

extrajudicial

reprisals against prisoners and about insufficient

providing them

medical care and inadequate food supplies. No, it's in the directive

walked

about something completely different:

"A number of facts of unacceptable complacency and rudeness in relation to prisoners of war and special contingents were noted.

1. The German General Drepper, who was delivered to the headquarters of the DF, found himself in a holster hanging on his belt, a loaded pistol, a notebook,

personal documents, correspondence (57th Army) were not taken away.

2. When escorted to receiving points, they are left to move independently

lagging behind, lose
them on the road, create conditions for escaping from captivity.

3. In the sectors of the 57th and 21st armies, 2 cases of an organized escape of the officers in order to break through to Rostov were recorded.

4. In the 57th army, one of the former servicemen of the spacecraft, who was stopped on the road by a traffic cop, at the request to present documents, fired a shot at the traffic cop from a revolver in his pocket.

5. In the 65th army, one of the escorts on January 27, 1943 led a limping German prisoner by the arm, instead of forcing other Germans to do it.

All this testifies to the presence of criminal carelessness, the lack of proper order in the areas of military rear areas.

The Military Council of the DF requires:

1. Subject all prisoners of war to a search, seize weapons and sharp-edged objects,
personal
documents and correspondence.

2. Escort officers separately under reinforced escort.

3. In connection with the presence of a number of facts of dressing officers in a soldier's uniform, all prisoners of war are subjected to a thorough check.

4. Strictly demand from the convoys not to allow the stretching of the columns and the backlog of prisoners on the way.

5. Released from captivity / military personnel Kr. Escort armies to assembly points under strict escort. Immediately take measures to completely clear the rear areas of this category of people, among whom there are many corrupt bastards and traitors.

6. Demand from detachments a more thorough search of areas and a strict check of documents.

7. Stop sending prisoners to the rear without a special direction

the corresponding headquarters
(regiment - division).

8. Punish the guilty employees of the RO 57 of the army who did not seize the weapons of General Drepper.

Report the measures taken. Telegin.

Rokossovsky did not sign this directive, but it was unlikely that he was unknown to him. Knew

whether

Konstantin Konstantinovich, that the problem is not at all to prevent the escape of prisoners? Where could people
half-dead from

hunger run along the snow-covered Don

steppes in

severe February frosts, when hundreds of kilometers separated them from the German positions? Recall that in the Soviet
labor camps

located in the taiga and tundra, fugitives were not even pursued. Only in the spring did they find corpses - "snowdrops".

The main task was not

to prevent escapes, but to feed the prisoners, prevent the spread of epidemics among them, and also prevent extrajudicial
reprisals

against prisoners, including under the pretext of murder when trying to escape. We have to admit that the rear
services of the Don

Front failed to cope with these tasks. Tens of thousands of German soldiers died from hunger and epidemics, also
weakened by

many days of malnutrition in the "boiler". According to the few survivors, in the first days of captivity they were often not
only not

given food, but even the last supplies were taken away. Many also could not stand the exhausting marches on foot from the
ruins of

Stalingrad to the camps. As the German historian Rüdiger Overmans writes, "the vast majority did not see
any

cruelty.

It was still impossible to help them, and the shot was considered an act of mercy compared to a slow death from the cold. He
also admits

that many soldiers, being too exhausted, would not have survived in captivity even if the food were tolerable. Nearly 20,000 died

captured in

Stalingrad "accomplices" - former Soviet prisoners who served in auxiliary positions in the 6th Army. Almost all of them were
shot or died in the camps.

According to Overmans, of the German soldiers captured near Stalingrad, only about 2,800 officers and about 2,200
soldiers

returned home. To justify the Soviet side, it should be said that the German army and the armies of the Western Allies
faced the

same problems in dealing with large masses of prisoners. Let me remind you that out of almost 4 million Soviet

more than two-thirds of the prisoners captured by the Germans in 1941 died of starvation. After all

number

Soviet prisoners of war in 1941 exceeded 3.8 million people and were more than the average number of the German land army in the East of 3.3 million people. The German command even issued instructions, according to which the commandants of the prisoner of war camps and

officers who were in charge of sending prisoners of war to the rear had the right to seize up to 20 percent of food from the German army units for the needs of prisoners. However, this was not carried out in practice. The German troops in the East also experienced an acute shortage of food, and the prisoners were inevitably fed according to the residual principle. Almost as high

there was mortality among German and Italian prisoners captured in May 1943 by the Americans and the British in Tunisia (there were up to 250 thousand of them). Soviet troops in 1942-1943 themselves experienced considerable difficulties in supplying food. Soldier deaths

from

exhaustion was not only in besieged Leningrad, but also on the Bryansk and Don fronts.

Perhaps Rokossovsky would have been able to take care of the prisoners, somehow arrange their supply and medical care.

But Konstantin Konstantinovich was already recalled to Moscow on February 4. And since the Don Front was disbanded and part of its rear services, becoming part of the new

The Central Front, was transferred to the Kursk region, there was often no one to take care of the prisoners, which further aggravated the situation of the captured soldiers of the 6th German Army, already weakened by a long stay in the "boiler". Most of them died

v

front line, before they could be sent to the rear camps.

The American historian Richard Woff stated: "Among the leading Soviet military commanders

time, Rokossovsky combined outstanding professional abilities with personal modesty and adherence to traditional military

values. He happened during the war, amid the destructive desire of animal revenge on both sides, to show

humanity and compassion for the suffering of the once strong enemy and the unfortunate German population.

About how Rokossovsky really tried to alleviate the suffering of the German population and

to prevent violence against civilians, we will see in one of the following chapters. In the meantime, we note that the death of

most of the Stalingrad prisoners created the impression among the Germans of the special ruthlessness of Rokossovsky's troops.

After all, the Germans did not know that immediately after the surrender of the Stalingrad group, he ceased to command the Don Front.

The military leader, who himself experienced injustice in 1937, always tried to help the innocent victims as much as possible. N. A. Antipenko cites in his memoirs one story that happened when Konstantin Konstantinovich

commanded the Don Front:

"A lot of effort was required from the rear of the front to provide everything necessary for the 2nd Panzer Army that came to us under the command of Lieutenant General A. G. Rodin. I received detailed information about the needs of the tankers from Surkov, the head of the logistics of the 2nd Panzer Army, the same Surkov who, in the spring of 1942, near Moscow, was tried by a military tribunal for mismanagement.

I heard a curious story from him. Higher authorities replaced his execution by demoting him to the rank and file and sending him to the front line (at that time, such a measure was often practiced). Surkov was sent to one of the armies, which later turned out to be on the Volga as part of the Don Front. Deeply shocked by the injustice of the accusation, he lost all interest in life and started looking for a chance to die.

But then events unfolded in the most surprising way. Before the start of the offensive of the Don Front, K.K. Rokossovsky arrived at the site of one of the armies to personally inspect the positions. The commander of the front and the commander, carefully disguised, approached the high-rise, from where the terrain was clearly visible towards the enemy. Enemy bullets whizzed around. What was the indignation of the commander when he noticed a man walking ahead

in full height! He ordered that this malicious violator of camouflage discipline be brought to him immediately. Crawling and short dashes, the messenger approached the soldier and gave him the order.

He appeared and reported: - Comrade Commander! On your orders, Private Surkov appeared. Rokossovsky, not having time to cool down from anger, sharply asked:

- Which Surkov?

- The same Surkov who served with you in the Far East in the cavalry in peacetime.

It was hard to recognize an old acquaintance in him: covered in mud, unshaven, torn overcoats.

Both surprise and kindness appeared on the commander's face. Already lying next to him in the bushes, Surkov told him about everything that had happened to him, and received an order to report to the front headquarters.

A few days later, Surkov was announced that by decision of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, he had been reinstated in the rank of major general. Soon he was appointed chief of the rear of the 2nd Panzer Army, with which he arrived on the Central Front.

The deputy commander of the Don Front, General K. P. Trubnikov, described the circumstances of the capture of Paulus back in 1943, in hot pursuit:

“The encirclement was shrinking more and more. Signalers located the location of Paulus's headquarters. But there was no certainty that he himself was there. We had information that Paulus flew to Germany. And suddenly - a message: Paulus announced the surrender. Shumilov was the first to receive information about this. His units captured the headquarters of the commander of the German army, but Paulus declared that he would officially capitulate only to a commander equal or almost equal in rank to him.

I was overcome by doubts: is it Paulus? After consulting with Shumilov, they decided that I personally
I will check before we inform K.K. Rokossovsky.

Paulus was brought to the hut where Shumilov was. I entered the room. There were three in the form of the German army. Seeing me in a general's uniform, they stood up. The interpreter said that the highest commander had arrived on this sector of the front.

Paulus introduced himself dryly:

- Friedrich von Paulus, commander of the army group. (here memory failed
Soviet
general. Paulus could not ascribe to himself the non-existent badge of noble dignity “fon”, because he was not a nobleman. -
B.S.)

Behind him stood the second.

- Lieutenant General Schmidt, Chief of Staff of the Army Group. I am a member of the National Socialist Party. Heil Hitler! -
And he raised his right hand obliquely upward (in reality, Arthur Schmidt was not a member of the Nazi Party. - B.S.).

I replied that it hardly matters now, and turning to Paulus, I asked:

What party do you belong to?

- I'm non-partisan.

After that, a third one introduced himself:

— Colonel Adam, adjutant to the commander of the army group. I am not a member of parties.

I offered the prisoners cigarettes and tea. Paulus thanked. They brought compote in jars and cigarettes. Apparently there was no tea. Paulus immediately lit

up. I was tormented by doubt: maybe it's not Paulus after all. I'll inform Konstantin Konstantinovich, and he will go to Headquarters -
and you will get
embarrassment. Decided

clarify.

- Will you be Colonel-General von Paulus?

"I am Field Marshal Friedrich von Paulus. A few days ago I received an encryption
from

Berlin about assigning me a new title. However, I didn't save it.

- Present your documents. - Please.

Shumilov and I carefully examined the documents and the photograph. There was no doubt! I began to ask questions about the location of the troops remaining in the encirclement, about the losses during the encirclement, etc. He answered calmly and confidently. Yes, only the commander of the group could have such data. I decided to report everything to the front commander. There was a high-frequency telephone in the neighboring hut.

- How? Paulus? Rokossovsky asked. - Can't be. According to intelligence, he flew to Germany ...

— Konstantin Konstantinovich! I can honestly say that he is. Personally checked. - So, you can report to Moscow?

Rokossovsky was silent. I understood that he was consulting with a member of the Military Council

Telegin and
Marshal of Artillery Voronov. Then he spoke again:

"Have you figured it out well, Kuzma Petrovich?" What does it look like?

- Unsightly.

- Well, feed, treat with vodka and send quickly to the headquarters of the front. I returned to Shumilov's hut and invited Paulus to dine.

After dinner, the prisoners were sent to the headquarters of the front in an armored car with special guards. Delivered Paulus late at night. There he was interrogated by Rokossovsky and Voronov, after which airplane sent to Moscow.

The Soviet generals were clearly surprised that the German command did not evacuate Paulus and his headquarters, as well as other generals, by air, although they had such an opportunity. Soviet

command in such cases acted quite differently. For example, before the fall of Sevastopol, the commander of the Separate Primorsky Army I.E. Petrov, the commander of the Black Sea Fleet F.S. Oktyabrsky and many other generals and admirals were taken out by planes and submarines. For Paulus and other German generals in Stalingrad, the question of leaving their soldiers to the mercy of fate did not even arise. Only a few of them were evacuated by air as irreplaceable specialists.

It was Rokossovsky, as the rumor says, that Paulus gave his gun. Although this seems to contradict the directive of the military council of the Don Front of January 29, which requires that personal weapons be confiscated from German prisoners of war. If it was carried out with respect to Paulus, then remove

the gun he had must have captured him soldiers of the 64th army of M. S. Shumilov. Although, of course, later the gun could be transferred to Rokossovsky.

After the victory in Stalingrad, the generals participating in the battle began to "pull the blanket over themselves." Everyone believed that more than others deserved the glory of the winner. At the same time, those generals who participated in the Battle of Stalingrad from the first day considered only themselves "true Stalingraders." Many of them were hostile to Rokossovsky, believing that he had come "to do everything ready" - to finish off Paulus. These sentiments were reflected in the reports of the special departments.

On March 5, 1943, the head of the 2nd department of the 3rd department of the NKVD of the USSR V. Ilyin reported to

Directorate of the Special Departments of the NKVD of the USSR on the negative phenomena in parts of the Don Front:

"Reports come to the headquarters of the armies and the headquarters of the front, one of which always excludes the other.

Deputy early Lieutenant Colonel Nikolaenko of the personnel department of the Don Front says: "I have to sort out award materials.

Divisional commanders bring incredible confusion to these matters. In particular, the capture of the village of Vertyachy is attributed to several divisions, including the 252nd, which took place

side. The disputes of the generals have monstrously grown, preventing the creation of a clear picture of the military actions and, ultimately, hindering the conduct of the war."

In a number of cases, arrogance took place on the Donfront. The source spent several days at the headquarters of the 62nd Army, which fought exceptionally staunchly in Stalingrad. However, the leaders of the army were in a mood of arrogance.

Lieutenant General Gurov, a member of the Armed Forces, emphasized in all conversations that only the armies that were in Stalingrad (62 and 64) could consider themselves defenders of Stalingrad. These sentiments manifested themselves at a rally in Stalingrad on February 4, where Rokossovsky was simply Not mentioned.

The members of the Military Council of the 62nd Army were engaged in praising each other and even found their own singer-writer Nikolai Wirth, who appeared in Pravda with articles that writers in Moscow in the joke is called "The mind and wisdom of Chuikov."

The head of the Donfront PD, General Galadzhev, told the source:

"I have a number of signals that the Armed Forces of the 62nd Army are contemptuous of us, the headquarters of the Don Front. General Gurov, apparently, is dizzy from success and this will not lead to good. It's not about the headquarters of the front, not about the attitude towards individuals, but about Gurov's attitude towards himself.

In this light, the behavior of the Armed Forces 62 in relation to the Hero of the Soviet Union, General Rodimtsev, commander of the 13th Guards Division, looks ugly.

At one time (autumn 1942), censorship allowed writing about Rodimtsev, since he is widely known for border. Materials about Stalingrad came mainly from the Rodimtsev division,

played a big role in saving Stalingrad. Lieutenant Generals Chuikov and Gurov were offended by this, Gurov directly told the source - "they gave all the glory of Stalingrad to Rodimtsev." An unhealthy atmosphere was created around Rodimtsev, even obviously unworthy conversations began - "Rodimtsev is a general for the newspapers, he did nothing," etc.

VS 62 introduced Rodimtsev to the Order of Suvorov, and then sent a telegram to the headquarters of the DF with the cancellation of the presentation. Rodimtsev is almost the only unit commander who was not awarded
behind
Stalingrad.

Rodimtsev himself told the source: "A fuss is going on around my division, which costs nothing and has no reason."

Khrushchev's assistant, Lieutenant Colonel Gapochka, who had not recently been in Stalingrad, apparently from the words of the same commanders, told the source that Rodimtsev was arrogant.

The writer K. Simonov, who was recently with the commander of the 64th Army, Lieutenant General Shumilov, says:

"Shumilov simply cannot hear the name Rodimtsev. The matter is explained simply - Lieutenant General Chuikov, a friend of Shumilov, is trying with all his might to pinch Rodimtsev, jealous of his glory.

Cinematographer R. Carmen says:

"Strange things are being done to Rodimtsev. They want to belittle him in every possible way, although he, like a hero, goes beyond the ordinary division commander.

It must be emphasized that Rokossovsky never chased fame because of natural modesty and did not take part in disputes over who did more to win in Stalingrad.

After Stalingrad, the commander's star of Rokossovsky rose high. He became one of the most popular commanders of the Red Army, moreover, vested with Stalin's special confidence. His name sounded all over the world as the name of the commander of the front, before whom for the first time in history

World War II capitulated the commander of the German army. And ahead were new victories and new challenges.

Chapter Eight BATTLE OF KURSK

On February 4, 1943, Rokossovsky was summoned to Moscow. He recalled:

“On the same day we went to the Kremlin and were received by Stalin. Seeing us, he approached with quick steps and, without letting us report our arrival according to the regulations, began to shake hands with us, congratulating us on the successful completion of the operation to eliminate the enemy grouping. It was felt that he was pleased with the course of events. We talked for a long time. Stalin expressed some thoughts about the future development of hostilities.

Parting words of wishes for new successes, we left his office. I cannot remain silent about the fact that Stalin, at the right moments, knew how to charm the interlocutor, surround him with warmth and attention and make me remember every meeting with him for a long time ... (It is interesting that on February 4, at a meeting with Stalin, together with Rokossovsky, the head of the NKVD Directorate for Prisoners of War, P. K. Soprunenko, was present - one of those who organized the execution of Polish officers in Katyn in 1940 and other places. Obviously, this time it was about what to do with

taken prisoners near Stalingrad. But Pyotr Karpovich left at 23.10, and Konstantin Konstantinovich entered the office at 23.15, so the question of the prisoners, obviously, was resolved without him. And we will probably never know how Stalin decided the fate of the captured Germans - either he ordered them to be kept in unbearable conditions so that they would die as soon as possible, or he ordered to take care and try to save their lives in order to have certain propaganda trump cards, but negligent performers let us down. Although the Supreme Commander certainly ordered to take care of the captured generals and officers, perhaps hoping to use them in the future in the political game around post-war Germany. Therefore, of the captured 4300 officers and generals, the majority survived. - B.S.)

Before parting, Stalin warned me that a new task was entrusted to me, on the successful solution of which much depended. At the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, we were acquainted with the general plan for the development of the offensive in the Kursk direction. For the sake of this, a new front was created, which was called the Central. It included the 21st, 65th combined arms and 16th air armies of the Don Front, the 2nd tank, 70th armies and a number of units and formations from the reserve

Rates. In cooperation with the Western and Bryansk fronts, the Central Front was supposed to surround
And
destroy the Oryol grouping of the enemy.

The troops of the new front were to turn around between the Bryansk and Voronezh fronts, which at that time continued to advance in the Kursk and Kharkov directions, and, interacting with the Bryansk front, deliver a deep blow in the general direction to Gomel, Smolensk, to the flank and rear of the Oryol enemy grouping.

The beginning of this beautiful operation was scheduled for February 15th. But, in order to start it, it was necessary first of all to concentrate troops, the bulk of which, with their own rear was in the area of Stalingrad.

Due to the difficulties of redeployment, especially of the rear units, the start date of the offensive had to be postponed to February 25th.

Rokossovsky recalled:

“The offensive initially developed successfully. The 65th Army, supported on the right by part of the forces of the 70th Army, pushing back the enemy, reached Komarichi and Lyutezh, the 2nd Panzer Army captured Seredina-Buda, and the cavalry rifle group, not encountering particularly strong resistance, broke out even further. Anticipating a trick on the part of the enemy, I ordered Kryukov to stop and

firmly gain a foothold on the line of Sevsk. But the restless slasher was not so easy to appease in his impulse. He had already reached the Desna at Novgorod-Seversky, caring little for reconnaissance on the flanks.

When the troops of the Don Front were transferred to a new direction, Rokossovsky made one unfortunate mistake. According to the memoirs of N. A.

Antipenko, who at that moment was chief

the rear of the Bryansk Front, “February snowstorms raged. Troops and military equipment continued to arrive by rail in the region of Yelets and Liven as part of the

Central (former Don) Front. His headquarters was ordered to be located in the village of Svoboda north of Kursk. The headquarters arrived here in separate

echelons for many days. Moving to the Kursk direction, the front command left all its road units and road equipment on the Volga, underestimating the

role of the rear in the preparation and conduct of upcoming operations. For the transport of personal

composition and

field administration institutions were provided with 30 trains, a lot of property was loaded into them, but there was no place for road equipment.

It cost the troops dearly!

The units unloaded from the wagons in Yelets and Livny were to make a 150-200

kilometers."

For this mistake, to a large extent, the chief of the rear of the Don, and then the Central Front, I. G. Sovetnikov, who was replaced by N. A. Antipenko, was responsible. According to

the latter, the rear forces who were in Kursk could not work, since "the Nazis bombed Kursk day and night. Headquarters and

services suffered considerable losses, but they could not leave Kursk

because of

complete lack of roads: at least 10-15 villages were required to accommodate rear services, and roads were needed. The situation

was aggravated by the beginning of the thaw.

German raids continued in the following months. N. A. Antipenko recalled:

"Intelligence data and analysis of the situation left no doubt that a gigantic

battle on the Kursk salient. During these weeks I had to visit the front commander, the chief of staff almost daily. Once (it was in the

middle of May) I went to the CP with a report. Approaching the village, I saw how the German plane made two or three approaches

to it. When we entered the village, a terrible picture opened up to us: Rokossovsky's house was completely

destroyed, and the wounded adjutant on duty lay on the ruins. Great was our joy when we saw Rokossovsky coming towards us.

He went to have breakfast in the dining room, 100 meters from his house, so he survived. He immediately wanted to listen to me. Reporting

the situation, I drew the commander's attention to the fact that the enemy was carrying out raids on the Kastornoye-

Kursk railway line with complete impunity and even destroying rolling stock and locomotives at night. In two months, the

enemy dropped 4,000 bombs on this site. By the way, it was known that for every wrecked locomotive, a German pilot received an Iron Cross.

The commander set the task for the anti-aircraft gunners - to discourage the German pilots from hunting

make night
raids on our trains. To the credit of the anti-aircraft gunners, they successfully completed this task. The practice was curious: the locomotive was placed in the middle of the train, made up of platforms without any load. Some of them were equipped with anti-aircraft guns and machine guns. If usually the machinists tried to prevent the sparks from the chimney from unmasking the locomotive, then in this case, on the contrary, they attracted the attention of the enemy. Several times, this technique was used to draw German vultures into the sphere of effective fire. After a dozen and a half aircraft crashed to the ground, night raids on trains ceased. Daytime raids on the bridges of the line continued

Kastornoye - Kursk. But railroad workers, military and civilian alike, adapted quickly to deal with the aftermath of these attacks. Near each bridge there was always a team on duty with a set of restoration materials. After the raid, if damage occurred, the bridge was immediately restored, and breaks in the passage of trains did not exceed 3-4 hours.

The offensive of the Central Front, which began on February 26, ended in failure. Rokossovsky confessed to P.I. Batov: "The calculation was that we would introduce the twenty-first army after you. But

The headquarters turned Chistyakov to the south. They scattered the brothers-Stalingraders on all fronts. But nothing there's nothing to be done, the situation in the south is difficult. The German counteroffensive against the Southwestern and Voronezh fronts is developing. With our strike on the Oryol grouping, we must alleviate the position of our troops in the south. The task is to cut the arc and surround the Germans under Orel remains."

In all likelihood, Konstantin Konstantinovich regretted that, instead of leaving all

The Don Front in the south, where the main events unfolded, its main forces were transferred to the central sector of the front for an operation against the enemy's Oryol grouping. Probably, if the main forces released after the liquidation of the 6th German Army had been used in the south, the Soviet troops would not have suffered a heavy defeat in the Kharkov region in February-March 1943.

The Central Front did not have enough strength to consolidate the initial successes. The 2nd Panzer Army and the cavalry corps of V.V. Kryukov managed to occupy Sevsik and, advancing 120 kilometers, reached the Desna near Novgorod-Seversky on March 7th. But the enemy, having successfully repelled

the offensive of the Bryansk Front directly on the Orlovsky bridgehead, launched a counterattack

By

tankers and cavalrymen who broke through to the Desna and cut them off from the main forces of the front. On March 12, they began to hastily retreat to Sevs. On

this day, according to Batov's recollections, Rokossovsky called him and said: "It will not be possible to keep the territory occupied by cavalry and tankers. There are no reserves. Troops withdraw quickly. It was decided to take up defense on the left wing of the front along the Sev River.

The retreating

troops of the second cavalry corps and the one hundred and fifteenth brigade, after leaving the battle, I transfer to the subordination of your army. Take up defense on

the eastern bank of the Sev River immediately. Act quickly, otherwise the enemy on the shoulders of the retreating forces the river and cause us even more trouble.

Most of the encircled, who abandoned heavy weapons and equipment, managed to cross to the eastern bank of the Sev River. The

GKO commission headed

by G. M. Malenkov and the military council of the Central Front came to the conclusion that no one was to blame for the defeat, since

tankers

The homeland and Kryukov's cavalrymen were hit by superior enemy forces, and there is no reason to bring anyone to justice.

The Bryansk Front, which launched an offensive on February 12, stopped at the Novosil-Maloarkhangelsk-Rozhdestvenskoye line by the end of the

month. The plan to encircle the Oryol group of Germans failed. As Rokossovsky notes,

"In connection with the growing danger on the left flank of our front, an order was given to the cavalry rifle group of General V.V. Kryukov to suspend the advance

to the west. She had to gain a foothold in the Sevs area and hold the city until the units of the 65th Army approached, at the same time continue to

conduct reconnaissance in the northern and southern directions, where

accumulation

large enemy forces. Kryukov violated the order. The cavalry group that came out to the Desna was attacked by large enemy forces in the flank and rear and

surrounded. Although she escaped from the encirclement, in which she was helped by units of the 65th Army and 2 TA who came to the rescue, but

suffered heavy

losses. The self-will and carelessness of General Kryukov cost us dearly: in addition to

significant

losses in people and horses as part of the group, we left Sevs, a large settlement and an important stronghold on the Sev River.

Now the Central Front of the 2nd Panzer and the newly arrived 21st and 70th armies dealt

attack on the eagle. However, the actions of the 70th Army were unsuccessful. She was

formed from border
guards whose commanders had no experience in combined arms combat. The 21st Army had to be urgently sent
to the
Oboyan region at the disposal of the Voronezh Front, which had suffered
heavy
defeat near Kharkov.

Therefore, in the second half of March, the offensive against Oryol was stopped. The central front went over to the
defensive at the turn of Gorodishche, Maloarkhangelsk, Troena, Lyutezh, Korenevo. The front was reinforced by the
48th
army of P.L. Romanenko and the 13th army of N.P. Pukhov from the Bryansk front, as well as the 60th army of I.D.
Chernyakhovsky
from the Voronezh front.

Rokossovsky saw the reasons for the failures of the neighbors in the following:

“Studying the situation, the enemy and predicting the nature of the upcoming battles, I
involuntarily

thought about the causes of many defeats of the Soviet troops over the past period, in particular

in the operation associated with the loss of Kharkov and Belgorod. In my opinion, this happened because our Supreme
High Command, when
conducting an offensive or defensive operation, did not pay due attention to the timely creation of the
necessary reserves,
during the offensive all forces were expended to the limit, the front was pulled into a thread, breaking away
from its bases.
The capabilities of the enemy and the state of their troops were not taken into account. Desire prevailed over possibilities.

Our deep operational and strategic intelligence turned out to be completely unsatisfactory.

During the withdrawal, the enemy had the opportunity to create large groupings of his forces and inflict on us
unexpected counterattacks, which there was nothing to fend off.

The absence of operational reserves in the depths of our defense allowed the enemy, after breaking through the front in
narrow
areas, to go with impunity to the deep encirclement of Soviet troops, and having surrounded, to destroy them without
hindrance.

On March 16, 1943, Rokossovsky wrote to his wife: “My dear
Lyulya!

I take this opportunity to send you a small parcel, consisting of all sorts of things.

I would like to

pack myself in this package and appear suddenly in front of you, but, alas, this cannot be done. I miss you, my dears, and I really want to see you. When we meet, I don't know. Things are hot right now. There is a lot of work, and you have to rest in fits and starts. Fritz began to snarl hard, and you have to keep your eyes open and strain every effort not to blunder. We drive them from Moscow

further and further, and this pleases me, they will not threaten you like that.

In the meantime, goodbye, my dears, I kiss you tightly, lovingly Kostya.

The headquarters of the Central Front was located in the village of Svoboda near Kursk. And the 85th field hospital was located in Kursk. It was headed by Galina Pavlovna Shishmaneva, the common-law wife of Vasily Ivanovich Kazakov, commander of the artillery of the front, a great

friend of Rokossovsky. She, in turn, was friends with Rokossovsky's beloved Galina Talanova. But soon tragedy struck. Just in June, Shishmaneva persuaded her best friend to go "to dinner with the generals." They went to the dining room, where Rokossovsky and

Kazakov, and fell under German bombs. Talanova was not injured, but her friend was

mortally wounded and died two weeks later.

Vasily Ivanovich buried Galina in Kursk, at the Nikitsky cemetery. After the war put on

her grave is an unusual monument. In the corners - four artillery shells, and between them -

heavy cast iron chain. At the top, a large five-pointed brass star shone.

In April, a commission from Moscow headed by GKO member G. M. Malenkov visited the Central Front. It included the head of the rear of the Red Army A. V. Khrulev, deputy

Chief of the General Staff A. I. Antonov. Together with them arrived the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) of Belarus and the head of the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement P.K. Ponomarenko, who was appointed a member of the military council of the Central Front.

At the suggestion of the members of the commission, Rokossovsky wrote a note to Stalin. Konstantin Konstantinovich conveys its content in this way:

"The note briefly assessed the situation that had developed on the southern wing of the Soviet German front as a result of the winter campaign of 1942/43, and expressed some assumptions about

summer of the 43rd. It noted that the most likely sector of the front, where the enemy

in the summer

of 1943, he will try to launch his decisive offensive, there will be the Kursk Bulge. There he will try to accomplish what he failed in the winter, but with greater strength. The ongoing transfer of troops to the Orel region and to the north confirms the possibility of such intentions of the enemy, and

front configuration contributes to their implementation. I stressed the urgent need to create powerful reserves of the Supreme High Command, located in

depth (east of the Kursk Bulge), to repel the impact of large enemy forces in the Kursk direction.

Attention was also drawn to the somewhat incomprehensible situation in command and control, when the chief of the General Staff, instead of commanding from the center, where all the possibilities for this are concentrated, decreases for a long time to one of the sectors of the front, thereby

out of control. Deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief also drops out on

some sector, and it often turned out that at the most tense moments at the front in Moscow there was only one Supreme Commander.

In this case, it turned out to be "distributive" control of the fronts, and not centralized. I believed that the management of the fronts should be carried out from the center - by the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command and the General Staff.

According to Rokossovsky, "using all the possibilities, by the beginning of the battle we were able to bring the number of rifle divisions to only 4.5-5 thousand, and only individual ones to 6-7 thousand people (in another place, Konstantin Konstantinovich specified that there were 6 divisions - 7 thousand Human

there were only four. - B.S.). At the same time (according to quite reliable data) in the enemy divisions that were against us, there were: in the infantry - 10-12 thousand, tank - 15-16, motorized - 14 thousand people. Despite the heavy losses that the German troops suffered in the winter, the fascist command managed to make up for them.

Rokossovsky had no doubt that the German strike force was concentrating against the right wing of the Central Front, and all

German activity in the center and on the left flank was

only

distracting character.

According to him, "if successful, the enemy would have gone to the rear of the Central and Voronezh fronts and surrounded

about seven of our armies defending on the Kursk salient. The incessant transfer of enemy troops, especially tanks and artillery, from the depths to the Orlovsky area

performance
confirmed our assumptions.

He admitted: "I can't keep silent about the fact that when discussing the upcoming operation in Stavne (we, the front commanders, were also present at this meeting), there were supporters not to expect the enemy's attack, but, on the contrary, to forestall the strike. The bet was right, not agreeing with this offer...

On April 4, by his order, Rokossovsky set defensive tasks for the troops of the front, demanding "to create a strong defense and strengthen both the main and intermediate lines, especially in tank-dangerous directions." At the same time, the task was to train the troops to conduct

How defensive as well as offensive combat, and by the end of April, accumulate at least two rounds of ammunition, at least three refueling stations, and at least five to six days of food and fodder. Konstantin Konstantinovich demanded: "Classes should be carried out practically on the ground, without allowing any conventions." It was also prescribed "in the process of training to train tank crews and units in the art of maneuvering at high speeds with skillful use of the terrain and conducting intense fire on the move."

Rokossovsky, who before the war and at the beginning of the war happened to command a mechanized corps, could not help but know that the tanks of that time could not conduct aimed fire on the move, and firing on the move would only lead to a waste of shells. Suitable stabilizers

appeared only after the war. But a big fan of such tank fire was Stalin himself, who issued an appropriate order in September 1942 requiring tankers to fire mainly on the move. From artillerymen Rokossovsky demanded that the main attention be paid to the organization of interaction with infantry and tanks and the control of artillery fire.

On April 10, the chief of staff of the Central Front, M. S. Malinin, in a report to the General Staff, suggested that the enemy would attack Kursk from the Orel region through Kromy and from the Belgorod region through Oboyan, as well as to Kastornoye from the same bridgeheads, respectively through Livny and Stary Oskol. Malinin considered the second half of May to be the earliest time for the start of the German offensive. He proposed "by the combined efforts of the troops of the Western, Bryansk and Central Fronts to destroy the enemy's Oryol grouping." He also asked to disrupt the offensive operations of the enemy to reinforce the Central and Voronezh fronts with aviation "at least 10 regiments per

Front" and deploy strong Stavka reserves in the area of Livny, Kastornoye, Liski,

Voronezh, Yelets.

In April 1943, Rokossovsky was twice in Stalin's office in the Kremlin, on the 11th and 28th. At the same time, on April 11, the meeting took place in a very narrow circle.

That evening, Zhukov, Rokossovsky, Deputy Chief of the General Staff A. I. Antonov, Molotov and

head of the engineering troops of the Red Army, future marshal of the engineering troops MP Vorobyov. Undoubtedly, future hostilities in the summer

campaign were discussed, with Stalin apparently leaning towards a defensive course of action and insisting on the creation of fortified positions in the area of the

Kursk salient. That is why Vorobyov joined the participants of the meeting, which began at 23.35, at 0.45 (and the participants of the meeting dispersed at

the beginning of four in the morning). It is significant that of the two commanders of the fronts, on which the main blows of the German troops were expected

in the course of the upcoming campaign, Stalin called Rokossovsky, and not Vatutin, to him. Obviously, he listened to the opinion of Konstantin

Konstantinovich to a greater extent, and not

Nikolai Fedorovich. It is possible that the meeting participants discussed Malinin's report presented the day before, which, by the way, advocated active

operations by the troops of the Central Front, provided that they were strengthened. It can also be assumed that Stalin expected a stronger enemy strike on the

Central Front, including because shortly before this, in March, Army Group Center evacuated the Rzhev-Vyazemsky bridgehead, and the liberated German divisions, as

Stalin most likely thought, will go to the creation of a shock group against the Central Front. Perhaps that is why the Rokossovsky front on the eve of the German

offensive was reinforced by the breakthrough artillery corps, which helped to repel the German attack.

On April 21, Rokossovsky received a directive from the Headquarters to evict the civilian population from the front line 25 kilometers deep, including from Maloarkhangelsk, Ponyri, Korenevo, Dmitriev-Lygovsky and Lgov. It was here that in July Rokossovsky's troops had to repel the offensive of

the 9th German Army of the Model. Settlements abandoned by the inhabitants needed to be adapted for defense.

On April 28, when Rokossovsky was again with Stalin, the meeting was much more representative. Members of the GKO Molotov, Beria, Malenkov and Voroshilov were present, and Also

Vasilevsky with Antonov, gunners N. N. Voronov and N. D. Yakovlev, and more several military

leaders. Interestingly, this time there was no Zhukov.

Konstantin Konstantinovich noted in his memoirs:

“Against the Oryol grouping of the enemy, hanging over our right flank, the formations of the 48th, 13th and 70th armies were defending on the front from Gorodishche to Bryantsev with a length of 132 kilometers. To the left, on the 174-kilometer front from Bryantsev to Korenev, the troops of the 65th and 60th armies took up the defense.

As always, I decided to create the necessary reserves in any situation, so the 2nd tank

the army was withdrawn to the second echelon, and the 9th and 19th tank corps and the 17th guards rifle corps, aimed at taking up positions in the 13th army band,

if necessary, were transferred to the front reserve. We have concentrated 58 percent of all our rifle divisions, 70 percent of artillery and 87 percent of

tanks and

self-propelled artillery installations. The troops of the second echelon and the front reserve (tank army and two separate tank corps) were located in the same

direction. On rest

211 kilometers of front accounted for less than half of our infantry, a third of artillery and less

one fifth of the tanks. It was, of course, a risk. But we deliberately went for such a concentration of forces, confident that the enemy would use his favorite method - a strike with the main forces under

protrusion base. Our reconnaissance and partisans confirmed that a powerful grouping of enemy troops was being created exactly in the direction where we expected.

Since April, the troops of the Central Front have continuously strengthened their positions. Rokossovsky So

described this process:

“At the beginning, it was supposed to build five defensive lines with a total depth of 120-130 kilometers. But then the depth of the defensive lines in some of the most important areas was increased to 150-190 kilometers.

For three months, the troops of the front equipped six main defensive lines. In addition, intermediate lines and cut-off positions were built, stretching for hundreds of kilometers. The passages of communication between the trenches were built in such a way that, if necessary, they could

serve as cut-off positions. Battalion centers of resistance, as a rule, were prepared for all-round defense.

In addition to mobile barrier detachments, designed to set up minefields in front of enemy tanks that had broken through, artillery anti-tank reserves were created in divisions, armies and at the front. In the reserve of the front, for example, there were three anti-tank artillery brigades and two anti-tank artillery regiments.

According to the marshal, "our total artillery density was 35 barrels, including more than 10 anti-tank guns, per kilometer of front, but in the defense zone of the 13th army this density was

much higher".

As Rokossovsky recalled,

"The tense situation, the expectation of fierce battles, caused legitimate concern among some comrades. Out of good intentions - to protect people from unnecessary risk, and without that

many who experienced and only recently wrested from fascist captivity - they proposed to evacuate the population from the territory of the Kursk Bulge in advance.

We couldn't deal with this. agree.

The evacuation of the population would inevitably affect the mood of the troops. The soldiers built fortifications, prepared to defend what they had conquered at any cost. Everything was done so that no one and thoughts are not

arose about the possibility of withdrawal. The command post, administration, headquarters and rear of the front were located in the center of the Kursk Bulge. We took measures to ensure that all the supplies needed for a long-term battle were also concentrated here. And even if the enemy managed to cut us off, we could hold the Kursk salient. The population believed in our strength and did not think about evacuation. The stake also supported us. To the credit of the Kursk comrades, they immediately realized that we were right. The thought of evacuation no longer arose.

Rokossovsky believed that the enemy would deliver the main blow to the 13th Army, Lieutenant General N.P. Pukhov, which consisted of four rifle corps,

twelve rifle divisions, a breakthrough artillery corps, a tank brigade and four tank regiments. The army had 114 thousand soldiers and officers, 2934 guns

and mortars and 270 tanks and self-propelled guns. The breakthrough artillery corps was here for a reason. The central front, according to the plan of the Headquarters, was to be the first to go on the offensive, if the German offensive had

didn't start

until mid-July. The Voronezh Front was supposed to go on the offensive later, so the concentration of reinforcements there had not yet been completed.

According to the memoirs of N. S. Khrushchev, a member of the military council of the Voronezh Front, this front was supposed to launch an offensive on

July 20, and this circumstance determined that "we could get everything we need

was, only to the
named term. Stalin told us that Rokossovsky's Central Front would conduct an offensive operation six days
before us, and then
we would begin our operation. I am this
remember
because the heavy artillery corps of the reserve of the Supreme High Command was sent first to Rokossovsky
to ensure a
breakthrough of the fascist front there, and when he does his job there, he will come into our possession and will assist our
offensive ...

The artillery corps of the reserve of the Supreme High Command has already taken its
positions. And the enemy began to attack immediately against us and Rokossovsky at the same time. So

Thus, Rokossovsky was in a more advantageous position. Since, according to the plan, he was supposed to attack
first, he was
the first to receive replenishment, and ammunition, and everything else. Why am I referring to this? So that the reader
understands
why this turned out against Vatutin and me for some time. The enemy, when he began to advance, broke through in our
direction deeper
than that of Rokossovsky, who was better prepared. And we still had 15 days to go.

our
offensive; according to the plan, we had time in reserve. And suddenly it was reduced, the enemy forestalled us. It's
a very long time in terms
of bringing in replacements and stuff to the front line." The artillery corps was very useful to Rokossovsky in repelling the
German
offensive, as well as the ammunition intended for the offensive. It is no coincidence that during the defensive
operation the
Central Front fired two and a half times more shells than the Voronezh Front.

front.

The 70th Army of Lieutenant General I.V. Galanin consisted of eight rifle divisions and three tank regiments with 96,000
personnel, 1,678 guns and mortars, and 125 tanks. In the 5th army of General P. L. Romanenko, there were 84 thousand
people, 1454
guns and mortars and

178 tanks and self-propelled guns in seven rifle divisions and six tank and self-propelled artillery regiments.
These two armies,
along with the 2nd Tank Army of Lieutenant General A. G. Rodin
endured
the main burden of defense near Kursk. Rodin's army had 37,000 men, 338 guns and mortars, and 477 tanks
and self-propelled
guns. In total, before the start of the Battle of Kursk, the Central Front consisted of 738 thousand people,
5282 guns, 5637 mortars,
1783 tanks and self-propelled guns, 1092

aircraft. They

were opposed by 22 divisions of the 9th Nazi Army and 4 infantry divisions of the 2nd Army - a total of 460 thousand people, 6000 guns and up to 1200 tanks. In the direction of the main attack expected by Rokossovsky - in the defense zone of the 13th and the right flank of the 70th Army - the Germans managed to create a 1.2-fold superiority in people and equality in tanks.

Shortly before the start of the German offensive, in June, Rokossovsky's command post was bombed, but neither Konstantin Konstantinovich himself nor senior officers suffered from it. After that, dugouts were built near the headquarters of the front.

K. F. Telegin recalled: "We concentrated our main forces in the Ponyri area. True, this led to a rather risky weakening of the left flank, but the command proceeded from the fact that the Ponyri area represented the most dangerous direction in the event of a breakthrough by the enemy, since the enemy's passage directly to Kursk, when interacting with the southern grouping from Belgorod, would create a real danger of encirclement our troops. When struck in any other sector, the enemy could only push our troops back to Kursk, and the encirclement

ruled out."

On July 3, 1943, in his directive to the armies of the front, Rokossovsky noted that "the data of radio interceptions of enemy reconnaissance aircraft and a number of recent raids by his aircraft show that our most important targets are easily recognized by the enemy and bombarded." The front commander demanded to improve the camouflage and create a number of false airfields, CI, crossings, etc. The measures taken were ordered to be reported on July 7, but two days earlier, the long-awaited German offensive began.

A. E. Golovanov testifies:

"Not everyone in our military leadership agreed with the expectation of an offensive by the enemy. Some suggested a preemptive strike, or, to put it simply, we should be the first to launch an offensive. These proposals somewhat shook the confidence of the Supreme Commander in his decision to conduct defensive operations on the Kursk salient. When I visited him with reports, I heard expressed doubts that we were doing the right thing, waiting for the start of action on the part of the Germans ... However, such conversations ended with Stalin concluding: "I believe Rokossovsky."

But the closer summer approached, the more acutely the tension was felt. There was already a question, whose nerves are stronger. Since the beginning of May, we have received undercover information that on the 2nd, then on the 12th of this month the Germans will begin the offensive. But these days passed, and no offensive

the enemy did not take action. The fronts, of course, took appropriate measures to repel a possible offensive. June passed ...
Again, talk of pre-emptive

hit.

Rokossovsky also became nervous, fearing that the decision to
such
hit. And, of course, there was reason to be nervous. The approximately equal balance of forces on both sides gave huge advantages to the side that would defend, and little hope of success to the side that would attack. As is known, the defender (of course, if
he knows
military affairs) much less forces are needed in order to repel the enemy's offensive ...

Finally, at the end of June, information was received that the enemy would launch an offensive on July 2. The troops were brought to proper readiness, but the German offensive again did not take place. July 3rd
also was not. July 4 is the same. The tension became extreme.

On the night of July 5, I was at Stalin's dacha for a report. He was alone. After listening to my report and signing the submitted papers, the Supreme Commander immediately started talking about Rokossovsky. He recalled in some detail the activities of Konstantin Konstantinovich both near Moscow and near Stalingrad, especially emphasizing his independence and firmness in decision-making, the validity of his proposals, which always justified themselves. Finally, Stalin spoke of the situation now created on the Central and Voronezh fronts. He told about his conversation with Rokossovsky, when he, when asked if he could attack now, replied that for the offensive he needed additional forces and means to guarantee success, and insisted that the Germans would definitely launch an offensive, but would not last long, for they now barely have enough means of transport only to make up for the current expenses of the war and to bring food for the troops, and that the enemy is not in a position to be in this position for a long time.

- Is Rokossovsky mistaken? .. - After a short pause, the Supreme Commander said: - He has there now Zhukov.

From this remark, it became clear to me what task Georgy Konstantinovich was with Rokossovsky. It was already morning when I was about to ask permission to leave, but a phone call stopped me. Slowly, Stalin picked up the HF receiver. Rokossovsky called. In a joyful voice, he announced:

- Comrade Stalin! The Germans are on the offensive!

"What are you happy about?" asked the Supreme Commander, somewhat surprised.

"Now victory will be ours, Comrade Stalin!" - answered Konstantin Konstantinovich. The conversation was over.

"And yet Rokossovsky was right again," Stalin seemed to say to himself. And, turning to me, he added: - Please go to the Kursk Bulge, contact Zhukov and help them there. I will tell Zhukov that you are leaving...

I consider it necessary to cite these facts because the following opinion has taken root: defensive actions on the Kursk Bulge were foreseen in advance, and they are now considered as self-evident.

taken for granted. In reality, events proceeded differently. It was on the Kursk Bulge that our Supreme High Command decided to continue further offensive operations. Hitler also decided to look here for a successful solution to the 1943 campaign. Rokossovsky was the first to guess the enemy's plan, but it was not so easy to switch the preparation of the offensive to the organization of defense in depth, gain time and force the Germans to launch the offensive first. It was a most tense period of time, when, one can say frankly, there was a struggle of two opinions - to attack or continue to defend ...

K.K. Rokossovsky after Moscow and Stalingrad once again brilliantly showed his military talents. One can only regret that his proposal on the expediency of uniting the defense of the Kursk Bulge in one hand was not put into practice.

And immediately Golovanov confessed:

"I personally, for example, have absolutely no idea how G.K. Zhukov, so, for example,

And

K. K. Rokossovsky or I. S. Konev as chiefs of staff of any rank. These are true commanders with the necessary strong-willed qualities, who are able during the operation, in rapidly changing conditions, to make the most reasonable decisions and immediately implement them, and, in my opinion, they are not at all suitable for staff work.

Indeed, Rokossovsky has never been in a staff position in his life. In this, by the way, he differed from Zhukov, who, after all, spent six months as chief of the General

Staff.

Konstantin

Konstantinovich had such a good chief of staff as M. S. Malinin, and did not bother him with petty care.

According to V.I. Kazakov,

"At 0550 hours on July 5, when, after a 30-minute artillery and aviation preparation, the enemy troops went on the offensive along the entire front of the 13th Army,

members of the Military
advice and

the chiefs of the armed forces, having spent a sleepless night, were with Rokossovsky and now they were only waiting for his instructions in order to begin to

act. But instead of any business orders, K.K. Rokossovsky, as if wanting to make sure of something again and again, asked, we are sure

are we in our

plans and in full readiness of subordinate units to carry out the difficult task
on their

share. Having received a positive answer, he, somehow very at home, told us:

- Well, if so, then I advise everyone to rest for an hour or two. And then, if we stay awake, then we will certainly not be able to resist

and start pulling the

commanders and other commanders, asking for the situation and so on. But they themselves still need to figure everything out,

analyze the

reports of the formations, assess the situation. All this will take a lot of time. You can rest assured that as soon as

everything becomes clear to them, they

themselves will report. So I'm going to sleep and I advise you all to do this

the same."

Rokossovsky recalled the beginning of the Battle of Kursk in this way: "On the night of July 5, German sappers who cleared minefields were captured in the zone of the

13th and 48th armies. They showed that the offensive was scheduled for three in the morning, the German troops had already taken their starting

position.

This time was just over an hour away. To believe or not to believe the testimony of the prisoners? If they

they tell the truth, we must already begin the artillery counter-preparation planned by us, for which up to half of the combat set of shells and mines were allocated.

There was no time to request the Headquarters, the situation was developing in such a way that delay could lead to serious consequences. The representative of the Stavka, G.K. Thanks to this I

smog
immediately give an order to the front artillery commander to open fire.

At 02:20 on July 5, the thunder of guns broke the pre-dawn silence that reigned over the steppe, over the positions of both sides, in a vast sector of the front south of Orel.

Our artillery opened fire in the zone of the 13th and partially 48th armies, where the main attack was expected, as it turned out, just ten minutes before the start of the artillery preparation planned by the enemy.

More than 500 guns, 460 mortars and 100 M-13 rocket launchers fell upon the enemy troops prepared for the offensive, their batteries. As a result, the enemy suffered heavy losses, especially in artillery, and his command and control system was disrupted.

The Nazi units were taken by surprise. The enemy decided that the Soviet side itself went on the offensive. This, of course, confused his plans, brought confusion to the ranks of the German soldiers. It took the enemy about two hours to put their troops in order. Only at 04:30 was he able to begin artillery preparation. It started weak

forces and disorganized.

In the latter, Konstantin Konstantinovich was a little mistaken. The Germans delayed the artillery preparation and the offensive because they mistook the Soviet counter-training for the artillery preparation before the offensive and were preparing to repel this offensive. Only after making sure that the Red Army was not going to attack that day, the German command began the implementation of Operation Citadel. The enemy delivered the main blow in the direction of Kursk on the front of the 13th Army and the right flank of the 70th Army.

Here is how Rokossovsky described the first day of the battle:

“Getting into our minefields, enemy tanks were blown up one by one. Marching for

them

cars continued to overcome mined areas in their footsteps. "Gigry" and "Ferdinands" covered the actions of medium tanks and infantry with their fire.

Attacked by this steel avalanche, our troops fought selflessly, using All

means of defeating the enemy.

45 mm guns were also used against tanks. They could not penetrate the armor of the "tigers".

They fired at close range at the tracks. Under heavy fire, sappers and infantrymen approached stopped enemy vehicles, laid mines under them, and threw grenades and Molotov cocktails. Rifle subunits at this time

fire cut off the infantry following the tanks and exterminated them with counterattacks. Four fierce attacks were successfully repulsed by the soldiers of the 13th Army, and only as a result of the fifth attack, when the enemy introduced fresh forces, did he manage to break into the location of the 81st and 15th rifle divisions. The time has come to support these formations with aviation. The commander of the 16th Air Army was ordered to strike at the enemy that had broken through. Rudenko took to the air more than 200 fighters and 150 bombers. Their strikes slowed down the pace of the Nazi advance in this sector, which made it possible to transfer here the 17th Rifle Corps, two anti-tank and one mortar brigades. These forces managed to delay the advance of the enemy.

However, the counterattack of the 17th Guards Rifle and 16th Tank Corps at dawn on July 6 did not live up to expectations. The Germans, inflicting the main blow on Olkhovatka, brought fresh strength and

reflected it. The headquarters first transferred the 27th Army of General S. G. Trofimenko to Rokossovsky, but immediately reversed its decision, transferring it to the Voronezh Front, where a threatening situation was developing. Rokossovsky had to transfer front-line reserves to Kursk - one division from the non-attacked 60th Army and the 9th Tank Corps. They would have to repel a blow from the south if the Germans broke through the battle formations of the Voronezh Front. But Rokossovsky knew

what the

Vatutin is the Steppe Front of Konev, and therefore did not really believe that things would come to the encirclement of the troops of the Central Front.

Already on July 5, Rokossovsky threw 350 aircraft of the 16th Air Army, as well as two anti-tank brigades, one artillery and one mortar brigade, to support Pukhov's army, which, as expected, suffered the main blow. 7

In July, the commander of the Central Front had to bring the 2nd Panzer Army into battle. She suffered heavy losses, but was able to slow down the German advance. On this day, the enemy was able to capture the heights west of Olkhovatka. On July 8, Rokossovsky used his last reserve - the 9th tank corps of General S.I. Bogdanov. Together with the 3rd anti-tank brigade of Colonel V.N. Rukosuev, they repulsed the enemy's attack at the junction of the 13th and 70th armies. Rokossovsky also withdrew two tank regiments and the 181st Rifle Division from the 65th Army in order to reinforce the threatened junction between the 13th and 70th Armies.

Only in one sector - north of Olkhovatka - by July 11 did German units wedged into the second line of defense of the Central Front.

On this day, they went on the defensive, as reconnaissance in force began on the Western and Bryansk fronts, which the enemy considered the beginning of a big battle.

Soviet

attack on the Orlovsky bridgehead, which followed on July 12. By the end of July 8, Model's troops had already lost 10 thousand

people, but did not achieve significant success. The Germans managed to advance only 6-12 kilometers.

Rokossovsky recalled: "From the very beginning to the end of the defensive battle, I was inseparably at my command post. And only thanks to this I was able to feel the development of events at the front all the time, feel the pulse of the battle and respond in a timely manner to changes in the situation.

I believe that all sorts of trips to the troops in such a complex, rapidly changing situation can distract the front commander from the overall picture of the battle for some time, as a result, he will not be able to correctly maneuver his forces, and this threatens with defeat. Of course, this does not mean at all that

the commander should always sit out at headquarters. The presence of the commander in the troops

It has

great value. But it all depends on the time and situation.

Regarding the relationship between the front headquarters and the General Staff, Headquarters and its representatives during the Battle of Kursk, Rokossovsky wrote:

"We had G.K. Zhukov. He came to us in the evening on the eve of the battle, got acquainted with the situation. When the

question of opening artillery counter-training came up, he did the right thing by entrusting the solution of this issue to the front commander.

On the morning of July 5, in the midst of the already unfolding battle, he reported to Stalin that

the commander of the front leads the troops firmly and confidently, and asked permission to leave for another place. Having received permission, he immediately left us.

Whether a representative of the Headquarters was here or not, nothing has changed, and perhaps even worsened. For example, I am sure that if he were in Moscow, then the 27th Army of General S. G. Trofimenko sent to us would not be transferred to the Voronezh Front,

much
thus complicating our situation.

By this time, I had a firm conviction that it would be more useful for him, as Deputy Supreme Commander, to be in the Headquarters of the Civil Code.

The second important point is the relationship of the General Staff with the headquarters of the fronts. I think that with

our side received quite complete information. But here some employees of the General Staff allowed excessive twitching, tearing off the officers of the front headquarters, including his chief, from the hot business, demanding insignificant information or clarifying the circumstances of this or that event at

a time not set by the plan.

In the most tense situation, Malinin (chief of staff of the front) was called three times from the General Staff to the wire to report that the enemy had taken an insignificant height in the sector of one of the regiments of the 70th Army. I would be embarrassed on this issue to call the chief of staff of the division, not to mention the army, to the wire.

Often from Moscow, bypassing the headquarters of the front, information was requested from the headquarters of the armies that entailed for

an overload of the latter, since they had to report to the direct command. Having learned about such facts, I was forced to intervene and demand in a decisive form to stop the harmful practice.

Representatives of large staffs need to understand and take into account the complexity of the duties of lower-level staff officers, as well as their excessive employment, especially during intense combat, and not to tear them away from work on trifles.

The established form (who, when, to whom and about what informs) must be observed and not violated in the first place by the highest headquarters.

Referring to the observed tendency on the part of the General Staff to manage or

to obtain
information from the troops, bypassing the command of the front, I must say that the Headquarters was also mistaken in this. On the third day of the battle, A. M. Vasilevsky called me to the wire and said that the commander of the 70th Army, Galanin, was ill, because he could not articulately report to him about the situation in the army sector. Having reported to Vasilevsky the latest data on the situation of the 70th Army, I considered it necessary to go there personally. Arriving in the army, I did not find any "sedition". Health turned out to be normal

Galanina.

This also showed a certain distrust, which I have already spoken about, towards the commander of the front. All these tendencies were especially evident on the part of the representatives of the Headquarters, who were at this or that front.

I think that such issues as the development of a major strategic operation involving several fronts or the development of interaction between them should be considered at Headquarters by calling in the commanders of the corresponding fronts. By the way, later this was done, which brought significant benefits.

The judgments of Konstantin Konstantinovich cannot but be recognized as quite sound. And there's no doubt about

that during the war he adhered to the same point of view on the relationship between the commanders of the fronts and representatives of the Headquarters, considering the latter to be a completely superfluous institution. But Stalin needed representatives of the Headquarters as a kind of "looking" over the commanders of the fronts. Not that he did not trust the commanders of the fronts at all,

any
case, in an effort to go over to the side of the Germans, he definitely did not suspect. But the fact that they can make the wrong decisions that lead to defeat was seriously feared. Moreover, before my eyes was the experience of the most difficult defeats of 1941-1942. Stalin did not understand that the presence of a Stavka representative above the commander made it impossible for the front to quickly respond to a change in the situation, often creating situations when the Stavka representative gave orders that directly contradicted the directives of the front commander. All this slowed down the decision-making process and made it difficult to quickly respond to enemy actions. But in

if successful, it could be attributed primarily to the Headquarters, that is, to Stalin himself including.

And as a rule, the commanders of the fronts were responsible for the failure, who were periodically removed from

posts, sometimes lowered in rank, and once even shot (this happened to the commander of the Western Front, D. G. Pavlov). Of the representatives of the Headquarters, only two were removed from their posts - L. Z. Mekhlis and K. E. Voroshilov, and the first was also demoted to

rank.

N. A. Antipenko testifies:

“The German attack nevertheless began at 5:30 on July 5, 1943. By the end of the first day, the enemy managed to penetrate our defenses for 2-3 kilometers in the direction of the Ponyri station, and in a very narrow area. On this occasion, M.S. Malinin said that same night,

what is the beginning

the end of the fascist offensive on Kursk, because its first day was not crowned with success: our troops

withstood the pressure.

On the second or third day, some people from the leadership of the front began to think that the enemy would still be able to break through our defenses and cut the edge of his wedge directly into Kursk. There were recommendations: to immediately evacuate away to the rear all the property concentrated

on

front-line warehouses, especially food. Doubting the correctness of these recommendations, I personally turned to the commander.

K.K. Rokossovsky said:

The Germans did not achieve decisive success in the first two days. However, this

Maybe

Now. And if such a misfortune should happen, then we will fight surrounded, and I, How

front commander, I will stay with the encircled troops.

Hearing these words, I thought: “Why should the rear of the front rush to get away from the troops to the east, taking ammunition, fuel, food there? After

all, the next day you can get up

the task is to supply by air to the encircled units the materiel taken out yesterday from near Kursk!

means to immediately begin the transfer of materiel not to the east, but to the west, even closer to those troops that may be cut off from supply bases, approximately

to the Fatezh region and to the west of it. The commander liked this decision. It was carried out at the cost of “total mobilization” of all transport and human energy.

The conclusion from this fact is simple and convincing: the more real the threat for the troops to be cut off from supply bases, the more resolutely it is necessary to concentrate supplies of materiel in close proximity to the troops.

The transfer of material reserves towards Fatezh was carried out without observing such formalities as issuing invoices, receiving receipts for the delivered property, weighing and

outweighing. It wasn't before! All home front workers understood that every second was precious, and no one objected to "violating the rules."

A few days later, when our

troops
inflicted

counterattack, and then went on to counteroffensive, the property located in the Fatezh area,

turned out to be very useful for us."

Rokossovsky's troops acted more successfully than Vatutin's Voronezh Front, preventing their defenses from being breached and achieving a loss ratio

one and a half times more favorable than Vatutin's.

And here is what the beginning of the battle on the northern face of the Kursk salient looked like from the German side. On July 5, the following was made in the

combat diary of the High Command of the Wehrmacht (OKW):

entry:

"5.7. In the morning, Task Force Kempf, 4th Panzer and 9th Armies launched the planned Operation Citadel. Our aviation, despite the unfavorable weather,

strongly supported the offensive operations of the troops.

The offensive, originally scheduled for 3.5, was first postponed by decision of the Fuhrer on 29.4, since the tank, self-propelled and anti-tank equipment of the

advancing divisions turned out to be

insufficient in comparison with the powerful defense system of the enemy. Based on the likely timing of the delivery of equipment for heavy tanks and anti-tank

guns, the start of the operation
scheduled for

12.6. Events in the Mediterranean region (the capitulation of the Italo-German troops in Tunisia in mid-May. - B.S.) caused, however, a new postponement

of Operation Citadel. However, 18.6. The Fuhrer, taking into account the considerations of the headquarters of the operational leadership, finally spoke in favor of carrying

out the offensive operation "Citadel". On June 21, the Fuhrer appointed the attack on July 3, and on June 25 set the final date - July 5.

The Chief of Operations Staff gave instructions to the Chief of the Propaganda Department regarding Operation Citadel. Taking into account the general military situation, a broad propaganda of the offensive power of the troops is necessary without disclosing the tasks for this year in the East. Our

true intentions - an offensive with a limited purpose - should not be revealed. That's why

it is expedient to present the matter in such a way that the offensive was launched by the Russians, but thwarted our defensive actions that turned into a counteroffensive, which led to the defeat of the enemy. Such a depiction of the situation will lower the offensive power of the enemy and emphasize the power of our defenses and reserves in the East. Thanks to this, the opening of the second front by the allies can be delayed until the end of the fighting in the East.

On July 6, the OKW diary noted that the southern grouping had advanced 18 kilometers, and the northern group, 10 kilometers. At the same time, it was recognized that "the enemy knew the timing of the start of the offensive, as a result of which the effect of surprise was not achieved."

On this day, July 6, in the sector of the 13th Army, Rokossovsky launched a counterattack with the forces of the 2nd Tank Army and the 19th Tank Corps. On the same day, he issued a directive, where, in particular, he noted:

"... The preliminary results of two days of hostilities showed that some units

And

formations, especially in the 13th army, showed insufficient stamina in defense, violating the order of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR of 28.7.1942, left without an order from above their

defensive positions and thus allowed the enemy to penetrate our defenses and break its strength.

Some commanders have not yet understood that an unauthorized withdrawal of AT LEAST one parts inevitably puts neighbors at a disadvantage and facilitates the actions of the enemy.

I order:

1. The military councils of the armies and the commanders of individual corps should immediately and decisively stop unauthorized withdrawal, and to the commanders who allowed it, as well as those who are guilty of cowardice and instability, apply the measures provided for by order NCO No. 227 in full.
2. Upon receipt of these instructions, once again bring the NPO order No. 227 to the entire command staff and divisions.
3. In combat reports on the results of hostilities for the day, report on the measures taken against violators of the requirements of order NPO No. 227.

4. This directive is to be announced against receipt to the command staff up to and including the commander of the division, brigade."

When this was dictated by the situation, Rokossovsky, as we have noted more than once, could be very

harsh.

In the operational summary of the headquarters of the Central Front on the evening of July 6, the failure of the counterattack of the 2nd Panzer Army

was recognized: "The 2nd Panzer Army, in cooperation with units of the 13th Army

led part of the forces

battles to repel the attacks of the advancing enemy. 16 tk - 107 brigade, in cooperation with the infantry of the 13th army, launched a counterattack

in the direction of the Steppe, but, having met an ambush of 18 enemy tanks T-UT ("tiger") and organized artillery fire, the brigade lost 50 T-34 tanks as a

result of the battle, 17 T-70 tanks and 2 T-70 tanks were missing." The 107th Tank Brigade of Lieutenant Colonel N. M. Telyakov was indeed ambushed in

the Butyrok area by the 505th Separate Tiger Battalion and lost 46 out of 50 tanks. The 164th Tank Brigade of Lieutenant Colonel N.V. Kopylov, who

came to her aid, lost 23 vehicles. The 676th rifle regiment of the 15th rifle division of the 13th army also suffered heavy losses, which had to fight its

way out of the encirclement from the area west of Ponyri. It was that rare case when the operational report of the headquarters of the Central Front indicated

the losses of the Soviet troops. It was usually said that "the losses of our troops are being specified", despite the fact that the German losses were

indicated exactly. To what extent the latter corresponded to reality is another question.

On July 7, the OKW diary noted that

"In the zone of the northern group, tank counterattacks of the enemy followed, pulling up powerful operational reserves." In particular, the 2nd

German Panzer Division reported: "On July 7, during a meeting, the commanders of battalions and combat groups came under Russian bombardment. (The

commander of the 304th Infantry Regiment, Colonel von Goerne, and several other people were killed, Major Shterz was wounded.) During this raid,

the communications platoon attached to the battalion from the 48th communications battalion was also destroyed. (Soldiers were killed or wounded, the

radio station on the car, the so-called "Maybug", was destroyed by a bomb.) Communication between the battalion and the division was provided with the help

of a commander's tank. Technically

from the commander's tank there was communication on medium waves with the tanks of the company commanders,

in addition, it was possible to establish communication in the VHF band with almost every tank of the battalion equipped with the YoKi-5 radio station.

Despite the extremely large number of destroyed enemy tanks, which our companies could report in those days - and perhaps for this very reason -

losses in people and combat

technique

were very high. They also concerned the personnel of communications units. At the notorious height 204 Podzuborovka, this offensive was stopped. From the forward battalion command post, located in the pit under the wrecked T-34, communication was established with the neighboring

battle group - Colonel Buk. With almost continuous heavy artillery fire, maintaining this connection was a big problem.

Despite the heavy losses, signalmen constantly went out in search of breaks in the line. Not

a small communications detachment, protected by armor, turned out to be almost covered with earth right on

height.

During the shelling from the "Stalinist organs", the vehicles and means of communication were damaged, but continued to work."

Major General Karl Wilhelm von Schlieben's 18th Panzer Division advanced to the area west of Ponyri and attacked the Soviet 307th Infantry

Division in a southerly direction along the Snova river valley. According to the Germans, on July 7, Luftwaffe squadrons made 1,687 sorties,

shot down 74 Russian aircraft and destroyed 14 tanks.

On July 8, Soviet troops counterattacked the positions of the 78th assault division and the 21st tank division.

corps. The 47th Panzer Corps, reinforced by the 4th Panzer Division of Major General Erich Schneider, attacked and captured the heights south of

Samodurovka, but was stopped by the Soviet 16th and 19th Panzer Corps. Between the 4th Panzer Division and the 47th Panzer Corps remained

a gap that has never been bridged. V. Haupt admits that "on that day, it was no longer possible to wedge into the Russian defense system near

Olkhovatka. There, the defenders, with the help of dug-in tanks, artillery positions and anti-tank ditches, created an extensive defense line that

was simply impossible to break through from the front. The command of the 9th Army has now received information about the approach of

additional enemy reserves. On that day there were

seen not

only fresh tank brigades, but also airborne brigades, that is, elite troops, through

which the battered army (which has already lost 10 thousand people) can no longer break through could."

On July 9, the German command regrouped and resumed the offensive only 10

July. W. Haupt describes the events of that day as follows:

"Lieutenant General von Ezebeck took command of the strike group, composed of the 2nd, 4th and 20th Panzer Divisions, which on July 10, after a short artillery preparation and attacks

squadrons of dive bombers went on the offensive. By the evening of that day, the shock group reached the Teploe line, the western outskirts of Samodurovka. 4th

Panzer Division was able to

even break through to the hilly area southwest of this area, and the 2nd Panzer Division was drawn into fierce fighting west of Kutyroki. It was not possible to break through the enemy defenses in any of the sectors ...

Already on the night of 11| July, it became finally clear that the breakthrough would no longer bring success. Therefore, Field Marshal von Kluge immediately withdrew the two reserve divisions of the army group from the direction of Olkhovatka. On the same night, Colonel General Model gave the

order to attack the 46th Panzer Corps, along which the corps was to attack the heights near Nikolsky (that is, the same as the neighboring 47th Panzer Corps) ...

And yet, by the evening it became clear that Operation Citadel was marking time. Now, on all sectors of the front, the Red Army unifications began to deliver counterattacks.

1] July in the sectors of the Western and Bryansk fronts, covering the Oryol bridgehead, started

large-scale reconnaissance in combat. Model already on the night of July 12, not yet having Kluge's sanction, decided to stop the offensive in order to be able

to transfer the troops of the shock group to defend the bridgehead.

Rokossovsky proudly wrote in his memoirs:

"We didn't need to use the Stavka's reserves, we managed without them, because What

correctly deployed forces, concentrated them on the sector that posed the greatest threat to the troops of the front. And the enemy could not

overcome such a concentration of forces and means. The Voronezh Front, on the other hand, solved the problem of defense differently: it dispersed its

forces almost evenly over the entire defense zone. That is why, in my opinion, the enemy was able to advance here.

on

a relatively large depth, and in order to stop him, significant forces from the Stavka reserve had to be drawn into a defensive battle.

By that time, the German command recognized the impracticability of the "Citadel" in its original version, which provided for the encirclement and destruction of the main forces of the two Soviet fronts (more than a million people) in the area of the Kursk salient. On this day, the

following entry appeared in the OKW diary: "During Operation Citadel, the Russian shock wedge was narrowed and the front near Belgorod was cleared. The

9th Army advanced only 2-3 km due to the stubborn resistance of the enemy. Since no quick success was achieved, it is now a question of inflicting

maximum damage to the enemy with minimal own losses. The German command actually considered the latest offensive attempts as part of the Citadel implementation only as a means of exhausting the Soviet troops.

According to the just opinion of Marshal A. E. Golovanov, "the results of the Battle of Kursk would have been even greater if Konstantin

Konstantinovich's proposal for a single command, that is, the unification of two fronts - Voronezh and Central into one, was accepted, because

the strategic position of these fronts required unified leadership. The majority then, together with the Supreme, did not agree with this, and yet Rokossovsky turned out to be right.

On July 15, the troops of the Central Front launched an offensive against the Orlovsky bridgehead from the south. From the north, on July 12, the troops

of the Bryansk and Western fronts advanced on this bridgehead, which on July 11 conducted a strong reconnaissance in force, which caused the cessation of

the German offensive. The commander of the 9th Army, Colonel-General Model, having received the first reports of the beginning of the Soviet offensive on

the Orlovsky bridgehead, already on the morning of July 12, removed the 12th Panzer and 36th Motorized Divisions from the Citadel front and transferred them

to the Mtsensk area. At 8:00 they were followed by

All

artillery battalions of the reserve of the Supreme High Command. In the evening, too, the 18th and 20th Panzer Divisions and the 848th Artillery Battalion

of the Supreme High Command Reserve from the shock group moved into the threatened area east of Orel. Model's actions were approved by Kluge and

Hitler. On July 12, Model was appointed part-time commander of the 2nd Tank Army in order to ensure the speedy transfer of formations from the 9th

Army there.

Rokossovsky recalled:

"... The whole plan was to split the Oryol group into parts, but also dispersed our troops. It seems to me that it would be easier and more accurate to deliver two main strong blows to Bryansk (one from the north, the second from the south). At the same time, it was necessary to provide an opportunity for the troops of the Western and Central Fronts to carry out an appropriate regrouping. But the Headquarters allowed unnecessary haste, which was not caused by the situation that had developed in this sector. That is why the troops on the decisive axes (Western and Central Fronts) were unable to prepare in such a short time for the successful fulfillment of the assigned tasks, and the operation took on a protracted character. The enemy was pushed out of the Oryol ledge, and not his defeat. It became annoying that haste and caution were shown on the part of the Headquarters. Everything spoke against them. It was necessary to act more thoughtfully and more decisively, that is, I repeat, to deliver two blows under the base of the Oryol ledge. To do this, it was only necessary to start the operation

a little later.

It seems to me that the Headquarters did not take into account the fact that the enemy troops (2nd Panzer and 9th Armies) were on the Oryol bridgehead for more than a year, which allowed them to create a strong, in-depth defense.

In addition, by the beginning of our offensive, the Oryol grouping of the enemy much intensified."

In the report of the senior officer of the General Staff at the headquarters of the Central Front, Colonel Fomin, compiled on July 24, 1943, it was noted:

"Having not achieved operational success in the battles of July 5-6, the enemy on July 7 and 8, continuing offensive operations, introduces into battle from the second line 2.4 TD and 31, 292 RD and castles 18 TD from

from the Protasovo area to the Ponyri area and during July 8-11 makes stubborn attacks in the Ponyri-Gnilets sector, trying to break through in the southern and south-western directions.

Despite the fact that the enemy introduced five tank and up to six infantry divisions, all his attempts to break through our defenses were unsuccessful.

Having suffered huge losses (up to 50% in tanks and over 50% in manpower), by 11.7.1943 the enemy managed, pushing our units back, to advance into the depths of our defense by 6-15 km and reach the line of Trosna, Sidorovka, (lawsuit) Ponyri, Berezovy Log, Bityug, Kashara, Samodurovka,

Gnilets,
Tar, Obydenki, Izmailovo.

Being exhausted by our troops in continuous and stubborn battles and having lost striking power, the enemy began to gain a foothold on the line reached, withdrawing his mobile formations into the depths of defense.

The general conclusion was that "the troops of the Central Front have acquired great combat experience and the ability to conduct stubborn defensive battles to wear down and bleed the enemy, saving strength for a subsequent strike.

The fear of tanks and aircraft that had previously taken place has been eliminated. The troops skillfully, courageously and steadfastly repulsed the massive attacks of aircraft and tanks, including powerful Tiger tanks, accompanied by Ferdinand self-propelled guns, thereby dispelling the myth of the invulnerability and crushing striking power of these new means of combat.

On July 12, following the results of the defensive battle, Rokossovsky issued a directive on the interaction of infantry with anti-tank artillery, since in the absence of infantry cover, anti-tank gun crews suffered heavy losses from enemy submachine gunners located on the armor of tanks. Rokossovsky demanded to provide artillerymen with infantry cover.

In another directive, issued on the same day, Rokossovsky summed up the results of the defensive battle and set the task on the morning of July 15 to go on the offensive. However, the offensive developed more slowly than desired. Soviet troops were pretty battered in defensive battles and advanced in a grouping that was unfavorable for an offensive, which had developed during the defensive operation.

Nevertheless, already on July 18, as Rokossovsky reported, the troops of the Central Front reached the lines that they occupied before the start of the German offensive. But it was not possible to break through the enemy defenses. The 13th Army, which suffered the greatest losses during the defensive battles, advanced unsuccessfully and by the end of July 20 was forced to go on the defensive.

On July 21, the OKB diary noted: "The enemy delivers the main blow along the Kursk-Orel highway, where he managed to advance with the forces of three tank corps to a depth of 10 km in the direction

Eagle." The 2nd Panzer Army of the Central Front was advancing here.

On the evening of July 26, the Headquarters handed over to Rokossovsky the 3rd Guards Tank Army of P.S. Rybalko.

On the same day, Rokossovsky ordered the 2nd Tank Army to enter the breakthrough in the 70th Army sector with the task of reaching the Krasnaya Roshcha-Gnezdilovo-Chuvarino line by the end of July 27th. On July 28, the 3rd Guards Tank

Army was introduced into the gap in the sector of the 48th Army. She was supposed to ford the Oka and go to the

Khmelevaya - Sebyakino - Korovye Boloto - Samokhvalovo - Gorki area. However, the tank armies failed to build on the success. Having suffered heavy losses, they only slowly pushed the enemy out of the Oryol salient.

The encirclement of the Oryol group of Germans failed.

On this day, Rokossovsky wrote to his wife and daughter:

"29.7.43, 2 hours. My dear Lyulya and Adusya!

Having seized a free minute, I hasten to inform about myself and about our affairs. So, on July 5, at 2:30 am, the Germans

rushed at us with their hordes of tanks, artillery, infantry and aircraft. Vdelo were

the newest armored monsters in the form of "tigers", "ferdinands", "panthers", etc.

dirty tricks. This fierce battle lasted for eight days, day and night. The results of the fights known from

newspapers. In general, we filled the Fritz here, captured many prisoners and military equipment. In a word, they poured the

Germans "on the first number." Now we drive them to the West, freeing them daily hundreds

settlements. You are offended that I write little. But believe me, there are days when you literally fall down from fatigue.

I am still healthy and cheerful. Lucky star accompanies me for now. There was a case when miraculously survived. The house I

was in was blown to pieces, and I didn't have a single scratch. So, I'm not destined to die yet. Now they say that a major victory has

been won again, I am leaving for the site. Well, bye bye, my dears, kiss you hard. Loving you Kostya.

On July 26, the OKB diary recorded "very strong tank attacks against the center of the 9th Army." And on July 29, the authors of the diary stated that "in front of the front of the 9th Army, pressure

the enemy is getting stronger. On July 30, Rokossovsky suspended the offensive of the 48th and 3rd Guards Tank Armies

for a day to replenish supplies and better organize the battle. 3rd Guards Tank Army "due to unsuccessful offensive

operations" | August he generally brought

from the battle, ordering her to covertly concentrate in the area of Voronets - Vinetsky - Korsakovo - Sakovinka - Muravl -

Gnilets by the morning of August 3. To disguise the tankers, they were ordered to maintain radio silence and not give written orders, limiting themselves to verbal orders.

On August 1, 1943, the following directive from the Stavka was sent to Rokossovsky:

"Recently, in connection with the offensive of the troops of the Bryansk and the left wing of the Western Front, the enemy has significantly weakened his grouping operating in front of the Central Front, removing five tank divisions, two motorized divisions and up to two or three infantry divisions from this sector.

At the same time, the Central Front was significantly strengthened by tanks, having received the 3rd Guards. TA

Rybalko. All this led to an improvement in the position of the troops of the front and created favorable conditions for decisive offensive operations. However, these conditions have not yet been sufficiently used by the front command.

The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command orders:

1. Immediately prepare and deliver a decisive blow with the forces of the 70th Army and 2 TA in the general direction of

Chuvardino, Krasnaya Roshcha, Apalkovo. At the same time, the 13th Army to break through the enemy defenses west of Koroskovo, preparing the conditions for entering the 3rd Guards into the breakthrough. TA at the time of its concentration.

2. By August 4-5, complete the concentration of 3 Guards. TA in the area south of Koroskovo with the task of building on the success of the 13th Army and striking in the general direction of Kromy to collapse the enemy's defenses

By

western bank of the river Oka and thereby contribute to the advancement of the 48th Army.

3. In the future, keep in mind to operate with both tank armies around Orel from the west, assisting the Bryansk Front in defeating the enemy's Orel grouping and capturing the city of Orel.

4. Report on the orders given.

At Headquarters, it seems, they did not want to reckon with the fact that Rokossovsky's armies suffered significant losses and were exhausted during the defensive battle, and besides, they had to attack

v

unsuitable for the offensive grouping, formed in the course of repelling an enemy strike. Rokossovsky was not given time to regroup and carefully prepare the offensive.

On the same day, August 1, the enemy began to withdraw on the front of the 13th Army. The German command decided to leave the Oryol bridgehead.

9th Panzer Corps of the Central Front in connection with this

received a task for the pursuit. The maneuver of the 3rd Guards Tank Army in the Voronets-Gnilets region lost its meaning. On August 3, Rokossovsky

directed Rybalko's army to move by the morning of August 4 to the Rzhava - Puzevo - Krasikovo - Gostoml region, from where she had to act in two

directions - to Rzhava, Kolki, Apalkovo and to Gunyavka, Chuvardino, Gnezdilovo. On August 4, the diary of the OKW noted "stubborn attacks by the

enemy" with the forces of three hundred tanks on the Orel-Kursk highway in the zone of the 9th Army.

On August 5, German troops began to retreat from the Orlovsky ledge under the cover of rearguards. On the night of August 5, the German 2nd Panzer

Army left Orel. On August 6, the troops of both tank armies of the Central Front began to pursue. The OKW diary on that day recorded "active attempts to

break through the enemy on the inner flanks in the 9th Army zone." But the persecution did not develop very successfully, in connection with which,

on the evening of August 6, Rokossovsky had to issue a rather formidable order, a copy of which was sent to the Chief of the General Staff:

"The enemy retreats to the west and, clinging to random, unprepared lines, seeks to delay the offensive of our troops and thereby ensure the planned withdrawal of the Oryol

groupings.

3 Guards TA and 2 TA, contrary to the favorable situation for us and contrary to my order, were marking time for three days and did not fulfill their tasks. This

was the result of the fact that the commanders of tank units and formations show indecision, are unable to force

their subordinates to complete tasks and extremely poorly control the battle of their units, formations and armies.

I order:

1. 3 Guards. TA and 2 TA - in the morning 7.8. 1943 with all the forces of the armies to break through the front of the defense of enemy units and, developing a blow in the general direction to Shablykino, cut off the escape routes his

the Oryol grouping to the west and southwest from the line of Naryshkino, Ostanino, Korovye Boloto, Nizhnyaya Fedotovka;

a) 3rd Guards. TA - to break through the front of the defense of the enemy's cover units in the Krasny Pakhar, Dolzhenki sector and, developing a blow in the general direction to Maslovka, Soskovo, by the end of the day on August 7, 1943, capture the Troitsky, Soskovo, Zvyagintseva, Maslovka area; in the future,

advance on Shablykino and seize Shablykino, Novoselki, Gerasimovo, Volkovo, Robye.

6) 2 TA - to break through the front of the defense of the enemy's covering units in the sector (claim.) Krasnaya Roshcha, (claim.) Volobuyevo and, developing a strike on Gnezdilovo, by the end of the day on August 7, 1943, capture the area of Efimovka, Goncharovka, Gnezdilovo, Gorodishche; in the future, advance in the general direction to Zhikharevo, Lobki, Kolosok and capture the area of \u200b\u200bGavrilovo, Turishchevo, Kolosok.

2. 16 VA - with all the forces of the army to contribute to the offensive of the 3rd Guards. TA, fulfill the assigned tasks by me.

3. Commander of the 3rd Guards. TA and 2 TA categorically demand from all officers accurate and

unconditional fulfillment of tasks. In no case should an offensive be allowed by scattered groups, requiring an offensive by the entire mass of tanks and motorized infantry of corps and armies.

The commanders of units and formations who do not perform tasks should be involved in severe responsibility up to and including being tried by a military tribunal.

Confirm receipt".

On this day, August 6, the troops of the 49th and 13th armies captured Kromy. However, the further offensive "with the whole mass of tanks" turned into a tragedy.

On August 10, a new directive from the Headquarters followed, ordering the preparation of a plan for a new offensive by August 15, which was to be launched on August 20. Rokossovsky was ordered to "create the main grouping of the Central Front in the area of Asman, Glomazdino, Dmitriev Lygovsky in

consisting of at least 20-25 rifle divisions, one tank army and the necessary reinforcements with the task of striking in the general direction of the Mikhailovsky, Starodub, Unecha farms to reach the western bank of the river. Desna, on the site Gremyach, Novgorod-Seversky. Further develop the main blow to

Unecha and cut off the Bryansk grouping of the enemy from Gomel, thereby assisting the Western and Bryansk fronts in defeating the Bryansk-Roslavl grouping of the enemy.

And thunder boomed. On August 13, 1943, the commander of the Central Front received a very

a formidable directive from the Headquarters, signed by Deputy Chief of the General Staff A.I. Antonov:

"According to the General Staff, the tank group of the 3rd Guards. TA in the amount of 110 tanks 10.8 in battles for high. 264, 6 lost 100 tanks, that is, it was essentially destroyed by the enemy.

This out-of-the-ordinary case occurred in the conditions of a general withdrawal of the enemy and the absence of a pre-prepared defense. At the same time, our tank group was destroyed by the enemy, penetrating only 2-3 km into its depth, i.e. she could be given

all kinds
help.

The death of so many of our tanks in a few hours testifies not only to the complete absence of interaction between the 3rd Guards. TA and 13 A, but also about the inaction of the indicated commanders, who left the tanks to their fate without any support.

For a report to the People's Commissar of Defense, I ask you to schedule an investigation and report the results to the General Staff."

It is characteristic that in the combat report sent on the evening of August 10 at 24.00, Rokossovsky did not say a word about any emergency events on the front of the 3rd Guards Tank Army. It only said:

"3rd Guards. tank army - during the day it fought stubborn offensive battles with the enemy, providing strong fire resistance. Reflecting repeated enemy counterattacks, units of the army were fighting by the end of the day:

7th Guards mk - bypassing Ivanovka from the south and north, advancing in the direction of Vladimirovsky,

but no success
had.

b tv. and 7 Guards. mk - as a result of a stubborn battle, they mastered the high. 271, 5 (2 km north - east Soskovo)
and continued to fight
for the capture of Soskovo.

Probably, Konstantin Konstantinovich hoped to spread the huge losses suffered by Rybalko's army on
August 10 over
several days and thereby smooth out the scale of the catastrophe. Similarly, Vasilevsky even greater losses of the 5th
Guards Tank
On
July 12, in the famous battle near Prokhorovka, the army of P. A. Rotmistrov scattered for two days - 12 and 13
JULY.

Strictly speaking, this kind of distortion of the truth in the reports did not do much harm. After all, no matter
when the 2nd
Panzer Army left the battle, on August 10 or 11, the Headquarters still could not immediately replace it with other
tank formations. Therefore,
the "scattering of losses", which was widely used in the Russian army back in the First World War, was never particularly
severely
punished. Another thing is when they were belatedly informed about the breakthrough by the enemy of the front and

capture
them of one or another important settlement. This could sometimes lead to catastrophic consequences,
as happened, in
particular, near Vyazma in early October 1941.

In fact, Rokossovsky knew perfectly well that on August 10, the 3rd Guards Tank Army had lost its combat
effectiveness.
Because on the same evening, five hours before sending the report to Headquarters, the chief of staff of the
Central Front, M. S. Malinin,
ordered on behalf of the front commander: "3 Guards. TA withdraw from the battle and concentrate in the area of
Sukhaya,
Torkhovo, Apalkovo. The day of 11.8.1943 should be used for putting the army units in order, replenishing supplies and
resting personal

composition".

An order from the commander of the Central Front, issued at 10 p.m. on August 10, was sent to Moscow to divert
attention. He
prescribed "13 A with 3 TV. TA and with all means of reinforcement - from the morning of August 11, 1943, continue the
offensive
and, delivering the main blow in the general direction to Kukuevka,

Lobki, Verebsk, Petrilovo, Brasovo, do not allow the enemy to organize
on new
frontiers."

And only in the evening report on August 11, Konstantin Konstantinovich admitted: "3rd

guards tank

the army has concentrated in the area of Sukhaya, Torkhovo, Apalkovo and is putting its units in order. Judging by the same report, the situation in the 2nd Panzer Army was no better, since it was "in

the former area carried out work on the restoration of the material part. As early as August 13, both armies continued this kind of work.

Only on August 18, the 2nd Panzer Army was concentrated in the new area to prepare for the offensive, the purpose of which was to capture the crossings across the Desna in the Novgorod-Seversky area.

However, it was not possible to hide the rout from Moscow. Obviously, a representative of the General Staff, who was at the headquarters

of the 3rd Guards Tank Army, reported to Moscow about the aimless destruction of a hundred tanks, and this report caused a letter from

Antonov to Rokossovsky. But the Headquarters laid responsibility for what happened not on the front commander, but on the army commanders, whom Rokossovsky himself had harshly and rightly criticized for omissions in command and control.

and in their

combat training. Although, I note, the results of the investigation into the reasons for the heavy losses of the 3rd Guards Tank Army by the

commission, which Rokossovsky was supposed to create on the orders of the General Staff, have not yet been published.

Let's try to analyze the results of the Battle of Kursk in terms of the ratio of losses in men and tanks on the Voronezh and Central fronts. It

manages to count more or less

exactly

only for the period of the defensive operation of the Soviet troops.

As the military historian L. N. Lopukhovskiy showed, the data on the losses of the Voronezh Front in the Kursk defensive operation, published in

the official publication of the Ministry of Defense "Secrecy Removed", are significantly underestimated. It says that in the period from

July 5 to July 23, the Voronezh Front suffered the following losses of personnel:

Irrecoverable losses - 27,542 Sanitary losses

- 46,350 Total losses - 73,892.

However, in the combat report of the headquarters of the Voronezh Front No. 01 398 to the Chief of the General Staff about the losses from

July 4 to 22, completely different figures are given:

Killed - 20,577

Missing - 25 898

Captured - 29

Total irretrievable casualties - 46,504 Wounded - 54,427

Total casualties - 100,931.

The difference turns out to be 27,039 people, including an almost twofold difference in irretrievable losses - 19,033 people more.

Losses for the period from 4 to 16 July, according to the same report, amounted to 18,097 killed, 24,880 captured and missing, and 47,272 wounded and sick. During the period of the persecution of Army Group South, which retreated to its former positions, the Voronezh Front lost 2481 killed, 1047 missing and 7155 wounded and sick.

Even more significant are the differences in data on the irretrievable losses of military equipment. According to the collection "Secrecy Removed", during the Kursk defensive operation, the troops of the Central, Voronezh and Steppe Fronts irretrievably lost:

Tanks and self-propelled guns - 1614

Guns and mortars - 3229 Aircraft
- 459.

However, in the final combat report of the headquarters of the Voronezh Front, it is said that in the period from July 5 to July 23, the troops of the front were irretrievably lost:

Tanks and self-propelled
guns - 1628 Guns and mortars -
3609 Aircraft - 387 (together with the downed ones).

It turns out that the Voronezh Front alone, according to the data of its headquarters, irretrievably lost more tanks and artillery than all three fronts put together, and almost the same number of aircraft.

L. N. Lopukhovsky noted that the data on casualties given in the report of the headquarters of the Voronezh Front are very close to the assessment of Soviet losses during the reflection of the Citadel, made at the headquarters of Army Group South. Manstein notes in his memoirs that by July 13, 24 thousand prisoners were taken by his troops, and between July 13 and 16 - another 10 thousand,